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Toward belief

TOWARD BELIEF

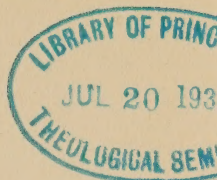


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TOWARD BELIEF



BY

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HOXIE NEALE FAIRCHILD

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TO
ANNE MY DAUGHTER

PREFACE

THIS little book is addressed to a reading public which, unlike most authors, I wish were much smaller than it is: namely, to all intelligent persons who have no religion or imagine that they have none, and to believers in search of a firmer foundation for belief. More specifically, however, it is addressed to the present generation of college students. They are undoubtedly looking for something in which they can believe, and I have heard some of them complain of the spiritual sterility of the teaching imparted to them. Perhaps they will listen to this frank and simple account of how one of their professors "got religion."

To make any original contribution to religious philosophy, or to convert others through emotional eloquence, is far beyond my powers. I am a teacher and student of English literature, not a theologian and still less an evangelist. What I have to offer is a demonstration of how a train of thought has led one man toward belief. The book is fundamentally a recital of personal experience. Almost

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exactly a year ago I was an utter sceptic in matters of religion, and had been in that condition for nearly twenty years. At the beginning of the summer vacation of 1933, I attempted to express my philosophy of life in a series of dialogues. To my dismay, I found that I could not philosophize at all except from premises which were essentially religious. For the first time, I began to do some hard thinking about the religious hypothesis. Now, at the beginning of the summer vacation of 1934, I find myself a Christian.

To me, naturally, this reversal is supremely significant, and I have thought that it might be of some interest to others. I should like to tell the reader what has taken place in my mind during the past year. But although my book is extremely personal, I have shrunk from the stylistic egotism of "giving testimony." Instead, I have dealt with the successive steps of my own progress in religion as general problems which each reader may consider for himself. Almost everyone should be willing to come part of the way with me. My great hope is that a few may be my companions to the end of the road.

To forestall a possible criticism I may explain that although the process of my conversion took place within a twelvemonth, I had not been wholly

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ignorant of religion up to the time when the process began. For several years, in fact, I had been a sceptically curious though not an expert student of religious beliefs. Hence though my acceptance of Christianity is very recent, such slight knowledge as I possess is of longer standing.

To the Reverend Granville Mercer Williams, S.S.J.E., thanks are due for reading the completed manuscript and making several helpful suggestions. I must, however, assume sole responsibility for everything said or implied in the following pages.

H. N. F.

Barnard College,
Columbia University.
June, 1934.

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CHAPTER I

THE OPEN MIND

IN order to approach this book with any purpose other than that of destructive analysis, the reader should have an open mind on the subject of religion. He should be willing to grant, pending investigation, that there may be something in it after all. Of course we are all open-minded nowadays; it is the great modern virtue. Unfortunately, those who are loudest in praise of the open mind are often the most intolerant of religion. In some intellectual circles, the mildest assertion of a religious outlook is met by a crushing dogmatism which the Pope himself could hardly equal. No one can be quite so illiberal as a liberal. Perhaps it is only just, however, that the faith which has so often been disgraced by its own bigotry should suffer from the bigotry of unbelief.

The open mind, to be sure, is not an unmixed blessing. Frequently it implies a lazy unwillingness to think things through to a definite conclusion. To remain in amiable incertitude on ques-

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tions which have already been answered to the satisfaction of all intelligent people is merely a sign of ignorance or mental incapacity. We do not admire the open-mindedness of him who is still willing to consider the possibility that the world may be flat. But is religion a closed question? If so, when, how, and by whom has it been closed? Just what rational basis is there for the rather prevalent assumption that no intelligent person can possess religious faith?

Perhaps you will say that the religious question has been closed for you by the hard-headed scepticism which you have adopted as a general rule of life. But scepticism has never closed any question, for it implies a mind so completely open that it never closes on anything. Religion thrives on scepticism. Whenever a man feels that he is living in an extremely bewildering world where no important problem can be solved by the sole use of analytical reason, he finds himself on the verge of faith.

"But," you may retort, "my scepticism is of the stern philosophical sort which refuses to draw any conclusions in the absence of definite evidence." Very well; although scepticism rejects all principles, let us suppose that you are a sceptic on principle. You must, then, refrain from giving affirma-

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tive answers to the following propositions: that your love is more than animal lust; that you live under certain moral obligations; that you possess free will; that the images in your mind bear some relation to reality; that the universe is a coherent structure; that any events in experience are causally related; that logical processes have any validity; that human life includes ideal values; that the work you are doing is worth doing; that to exist is better than not to exist. Surely you are not so unsophisticated as to suppose that there is much real evidence for any of these sentimental notions. Perhaps you would even assert the opposite of these propositions. In that case you are not a sceptic at all, but a believer. You have a faith which denies—quite as non-rational as a faith which affirms. Be honest and thorough-going in your scepticism. Carry it to its ultimate goal—doubt of everything that makes human existence tolerable. Then you will realize that we all, in some measure, live by asserting belief in ideas which are beyond our powers of demonstration, and that a world in which anything can be doubted is a world in which anything can be believed. Thus the consistent sceptic must open his mind to religion in spite of himself.

Of course there are many intelligent unbeliev-

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ers who have thought the problem through to the best of their ability and arrived at an honest, reasoned, negative conclusion. They do not sneer at those who have reached an affirmative conclusion, and they reserve the right to change their own minds under the pressure of new evidence or arguments. Such men deserve the respect of all believers. But for every man of this type there are a thousand pseudo-sceptics who have never given one moment's independent thought to the subject of religion. They abound in our colleges—delightful young men and women, so bravely iconoclastic, so full of sheep-like faith in the absurdity of faith. In this respect their shepherds—*mea maxima culpa*—are not always more intelligent. The Fundamentalists err in protesting against the presence of unbelieving professors in our colleges, for an institution of learning should be hospitable to every viewpoint. But there is real justification for a protest against professors who sully the ideal of scholarship by dogmatizing upon a subject of which they know nothing.

Some men refuse to consider the claims of religion not so much because of scepticism as because of individualistic pride. So long as the majority goes to church, they will assume that faith is contemptible. They are free men, not cringing slaves

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of convention. They scorn to think with the herd; they spurn stereotypes. Yet how herd-minded, how stereotyped, such men usually are! Why are these independent spirits so submissive to the half-baked dogmas of their own little *coterie*? They have not analyzed the stereotypes of their own unbelief, or made any first-hand study of religious philosophy. Having never experienced the power of a broad, humane, grown-up form of religion, they ridicule Bishop Cannon and the teachings of rural Sunday-schools under the impression that they are exposing Christianity. In short, they do not attempt to understand what they are talking about.

The reader may object, "What you have said so far does not apply to me. I am neither a complete sceptic nor a pseudo-individualist. In fact, I have great respect for competent authority. In this bewildering modern world one must have opinions on many subjects which one has had no opportunity to investigate at first hand. But there are people who know about these things, and for all ordinary purposes their findings are to be accepted. Surely there is good sound authority for dismissing religion as a closed question."

This attitude interests me very much, since the particular form of religion which I have decided

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to adopt makes a great deal of authority. It began about nineteen hundred years ago, when an obscure little group of unorthodox Jews supposed that an eccentric young carpenter was the Son of God. I need not remind you of what has happened to it since then. If you are going in for authority, you might consider the authoritative claims of Christianity.

Some people seem to be entirely lacking in any respect for tradition, but the deficiency is so rare as almost to constitute an abnormality. College students, who profess a lofty scorn of the past, constantly appeal to the traditions of their Alma Mater. In my undergraduate days at Columbia, growing envious of mellower Yale, we set up a wooden fence on the campus. This fence we blazoned with scores of initials in a single afternoon, thus establishing a ripe old tradition at one fell swoop. The impulse, though absurdly expressed, was a natural one: real thinking, real feeling, real living need a deep, rich soil into which they can thrust their roots. The venerable houses at Salem or Williamsburg, the fine old firm that employs you, the road once trod by Roman legions—we are silly about such things at times, but they have a value which cannot be brushed away. They exert authority. A great deal of sentimentality,

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superstition and obstructive conservatism arises from excessive reverence for tradition. But the best evidence of the practical validity of Christianity is the results of the Christian life, and no one is so anti-traditional as to deny that the fruits of twenty centuries are more impressive than those of a single year.

Authority without tradition is doubtless preferable to tradition without authority. The antithesis, however, is artificial. All genuine tradition possesses some authority, and all valid authority is to some extent an outgrowth of tradition. Authority without tradition is likely to become a legal battle between expert witnesses. The briskly modern prophets of today will deny themselves in next Sunday's newspaper, if by that time they have not already given place to other sages.

But let us suppose that you have a deep scorn of tradition combined with a deep respect for the authority of the expert. Who then is the expert on the question of religion—the religious person, or the irreligious person? Let us set side by side a behavioristic psychologist and a Christian priest. The former is deeply versed in a limited though very important field of psychological study which he supposes to be co-extensive with the entire subject. He knows nothing about religion, has never

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studied theology, has never had a genuine religious experience, and is swayed by an intense emotional bias against the religious hypothesis.

The priest has devoted his entire adult life to the worship of God and the service of man. He is a master of theology, thoroughly acquainted with all the big and little heresies, all the numberless shades of religious thought and feeling. He has experienced God, and has led many other men to that experience. He is a professional student, not of conditioned reflexes, but of the human soul. Doubtless he is deeply prejudiced in favor of his faith, but there is no reason to say that he is more prejudiced than the behaviorist. Do not suppose that the behaviorist is sacrificing his own desires on the altar of scientific fact. His greatest desire is to achieve a simple mechanical explanation of the human mind, and he is busily making a world which will give him what he wants. If he wanted something else he would immediately cease to be a behaviorist.

Now I will not accept the authority of the priest without using my own brains and my own heart. The point is simply that the priest is likely to be a more reliable expert on the subject of religion than the behaviorist. This thought is a very obvious one, but very hard to drive into some heads.

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The unbeliever generally prefers to get his opinions on religion from people who know nothing about it.

It may still be argued, however, that the development of certain kinds of non-religious knowledge has made it impossible to be religious, and that although the possessor of such knowledge is not an expert in the field of religion, he nevertheless provides authority for disbelief. Has not science made religion a closed question? Science has provided naturalistic explanations of many phenomena which, in the childhood of the human mind, could be explained only on a directly supernaturalistic basis. In so doing, science has greatly helped religion to understand her own subject-matter and functions. Religion has grown stronger and purer by restricting herself to her proper field. Science as heretofore understood cannot invade that field, for its success in quantitative measurement has depended upon an elimination of those imponderable values which form the subject-matter of religion. One senses today the first stirrings of a different kind of science. In works like Whitehead's *Science and the Modern World*, the old mechanistic view has given place to a new organic conception. It is widely argued that, if human values have arisen from nature, nature must

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contain the seeds of human values. Religion has nothing to fear from these developments. Without her help, the twentieth-century scientist will not get very far in his grapplings with the qualitative, the mysterious, the undemonstrable.

The cocksure mechanistic science of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries did indeed strike a blow at religion by threatening to transform the universe into a neat little watch. Thousands of people still live in the shadow of that threat without realizing that it is completely obsolete. Nowadays every scientific discovery opens up deeper and deeper chasms of mystery. Matter has melted away into positive and negative charges of electricity. We live in a world of waves of light, or of bombardments of light-particles. Space and time are two ways of looking at the same thing. Three-dimensionality is an illusion of the senses. The desk on which I now write is a seething mass of forces the true nature of which can be explained only by higher mathematics.

The attitude of the religious person toward the new physics should be one of friendly caution. The prophets of science, under the proddings of newspaper reporters, revise the universe every week or so; and the attempts of modernist ministers to keep pace with the new revelation are slightly gro-

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tesque. For example, the "principle of indeterminacy," which was hailed with delight in many churches as offering the hope of a stimulatingly irrational universe, is now regarded by most respectable scientists as extremely dubious. At the very least, however, one may say that the new physics has presented no obstacles to the believer, and that it has even lent some encouragement to his hopes. The tremendous difference between the way things *look* and the way they *are* merely repeats a truth with which religion has long been familiar. The reduction of the visible universe to algebraic formulas which can be apprehended only by abstract reason suggests that the underlying reality of things may be mental rather than physical. The new picture of a finite universe is more friendly to the idea of a definite creative act from without than was the old infinite universe. In the higher reaches of science the atmosphere has changed to one of adventurous speculation, with a large poetic and imaginative element. It grows increasingly harder to tell a scientist from a mystic. No religious thinker has ever been more boldly creative than Einstein.

"But astronomy has made man so insignificant that the religious hypothesis is rendered absurd." This popular argument is fallacious because it as-

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sumes what is to be proved. Religious hopes are not absurd in a universe of *any* size unless that universe is godless. The physical littleness of man cannot disprove the existence of a God who is less interested in size and blind force than in moral and spiritual values. As Bishop Fiske observed in a recent article, it takes an astronomer to make astronomy. We ourselves have discovered, arranged, and interpreted the facts which we allow to make us feel so puny. But the feebleness of man was an old story to the author of *Job*, and it has acted as a prime incentive in the search for God. No one need feel that astronomy has transformed this simple and obvious fact into a source of disbelief.

As for biology and kindred sciences, it is obvious that they reach mechanistic conclusions only by limiting themselves to the study of mechanism. They have nothing to say about the topics with which religion deals.

Psychology is a bedlam of shifting theories and warring schools, all subject to the fallacy that the invention of new terminology is equivalent to the discovery of truth. Nevertheless, this science or demi-science has achieved important results, some of which seem at first glance to bear anti-religious implications. It has, for example, become fashion-

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ably easy to dismiss religion as "wishful thinking." But this sword has two edges. Ordinarily we apply the term "mere rationalization" to the other fellow's thinking, but he may equally well apply it to ours.

Many people who like to think of themselves as hard-headed retain the obsolete idea that reason and emotion are wholly distinct. Reason is cool, exact, dispassionate, perfectly logical. It gives us solid scientific results. Emotion is a warm, dreamy welter of instinctive drives and sentimental hankerings. It gives us art and ideals and religion—pleasant delusions with no relation to things as they are. Modern psychology has broken down this absurd dichotomy by showing us that what we have called rational and emotional elements are inextricably mingled throughout all mental activity. Our reasoning is emotional, and by the same token our emotions are reasonable—or as reasonable as anything can be in this not very reasonable world. Shall we say "wishful thinking," or "thoughtful wishing"?

Every act of sense-perception is more or less colored by imagination, and part of every intangible waking dream is contributed by the world of sense. Hemmed in as we are by the circle of our own mental impressions, how can we dogmatically

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parcel out real and unreal, subjective and objective, the actively imagined and the passively received? To the modern psychologist, all mental phenomena are equally existential. In our religious impulses he recognizes an important body of scientific data. For him, Thomas's cry of "My Lord and my God!" is no less a statement of fact than "I see an orange." The relation of these statements to *reality* is beyond his power of discovery. In the last analysis, both are assertions of faith, and both can be tested only in relation to the different kinds of experience to which they are meant to apply.

"But psychology, by making us analyze ourselves, has destroyed that conception of human personality on which religion depends." This is only a bad case of nerves. Psychology could not be analytical unless it had something to analyze. Some people have been staggered by the fact that their sense of personal identity faded when they pulled themselves apart. Let them pull themselves *together*, and their personalities will return to them. The religious person may view with some complacency the increasing vogue of the *Gestalt* theory, with its reassertion of the importance of wholes as opposed to fragments.

Even if we think of ourselves merely as eddies in the universal flux, we must grant that each

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little swirl has a distinguishable quality of its own. Compare any two of your friends; listen to Heifetz and Menuhin perform the same concerto; watch two children playing together in the park—and then deny the fact of personality if you can. It is not a physical thing that can be pulled out of your body with tweezers, but a unique product of those psycho-physical factors which combine to make you what you are, a whole that is not identical with the sum of its parts. Is it real? That depends on your criteria of reality. For our own minds and the minds of others, personality is about the realest thing in the world. It responds consistently to objective tests. It develops like an organism, changing from infancy to old age, but never changing into anything different from what it began to be. It functions in the world as a unit of force. We need not restrict ourselves to saying that it *can* be regarded as an entity. The truth is that *unless* we regard it as an entity the whole universe becomes an incredible chaos. Can you devise a more stringent test of its reality?

“But physiological psychology has proved that mind is merely a group of functions whose operation and whose very existence depend upon the physical mechanism of the brain.” Here indeed some thorny problems arise. Science, however, has

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shown us a most interesting parallelism between brain and mind without proving anything as to the true nature of their relationship. Perhaps the brain is merely a tool which mind, as it exists in man, needs to use in its work. Harold Bauer's ability to play beautifully on a certain piano is conditioned by the state of that particular piano. If the instrument is out of tune, if the pedals are broken, if some of the keys stick, and if mice have built their nests in the case, his performance will be very bad indeed. But it is difficult to prove that Harold Bauer is not a great musician by destroying his piano, and even more difficult to prove the non-existence of God by removing the brains of dogs. Professor Pavlov's experiments teach us a great deal about pianos, but nothing about music.

A large number of young persons, and a few mature ones, suppose that religion has been destroyed by anthropology. Having dipped into Frazer's *Golden Bough* and Sumner's *Folkways*, they are ready to inform the world that religion originates in the superstitious fears of savages, and that virgin-birth stories are told by many primitive peoples. They might, of course, draw other lessons from these valuable books—that the religious sense is as old as humanity, that it is universal, and that it evolves from lower to higher conceptions.

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The comparative study of religious beliefs has modified the claims of any faith to absolute uniqueness so far as its outward manifestations are concerned. But the fact that expressions of the religious impulse in widely dispersed primitive races group themselves into roughly similar patterns does not remove the possibility that one such pattern was once used by God for a true revelation of Himself to man. An old story that fits racial habits of thought makes an excellent vehicle for truth.

The anthropological evidence of the universality of religion is encouraging rather than otherwise to the believer; and to the scientific mind the correspondence of religion with the general processes of evolution surely provides no argument against its validity. Let us remember, too, that the value of human institutions and activities cannot be measured by their apparent origins. As Aristotle observes, things are to be understood only by what they finally *become*. The natural origin of human love is a craving common to all animals, but the love of men and women is not that of monkeys. Certain practices, now a part of religious worship, may have originated in base superstition, but are they superstitions today? Judge religion by what it means to civilized man, not by what it means to the Bantu. Then, if you believe in the religion of

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civilized man, you will be able to interpret the religion of the Bantu with understanding and sympathy. Some of a child's ideas on a subject which can be fully comprehended only by an adult are utter nonsense, some are half-nonsense, some are fundamentally true though wrongly expressed, and some may be absolutely correct. Meanwhile the real truth of the subject is not nonsense at all, and the child may learn the truth when he grows up.

Turning now from science and quasi-science, shall we say that the way to faith has authoritatively been barred by philosophy? Only a very naïve person could answer that question affirmatively. No philosophy is demonstrable; none has any imperative claim to the acceptance of any human being other than its inventor. A philosophy, being one man's picture of the universe, is valid only for those whose temperaments and volitions incline them to paint a more or less similar picture. Anyone who does not care to live in Henri Bergson's art gallery can move over to Bertrand Russell's. Dean McBain of the Graduate Faculties of Columbia University, though not a professional philosopher, has a keen philosophical mind and is well saturated in the literature of the subject. Last year he delivered an address in which he denied

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the hope of immortality. His motives were high, his sincerity unquestionable, his arguments formidable. As I write, I have before me a little book, fresh from the press, entitled *The Chances of Surviving Death*. The author, Professor W. P. Montague of the same university, is a philosopher of high repute. His aim, antipodal to his colleague's, is to show that certain conclusions of the new science strongly support our longing for eternal life. His motives are high, his sincerity unquestionable, his arguments formidable. Some philosophical thinkers will side with the Dean, and some with the Professor. Nor can we find in contemporary philosophy any overwhelmingly convincing trend toward either the non-religious position of the former or the religious position of the latter. So long as the doctors disagree—and there is every reason to fear that they will continue to disagree indefinitely—it cannot be said that philosophy has nullified religion.

Where, then, lies the source of the notion that no intelligent person can be religious without hypocrisy or self-deception? It lies, not in any truths that you can discover for yourself or draw from any solid authority, but in a wearisome tangle of misconceptions as to the nature of science, the nature of religion, and their mutual relations.

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These errors have indeed spread an atmosphere of unbelief among thousands of intelligent people, but the atmosphere is not impenetrable. It is a fog which is beginning to lift.

If, after carefully considering its theoretical and practical credentials, the reader has rejected religion as unworthy of a reasonable man's acceptance, he and I must part company at this point. But if, without much thought or investigation, he has assumed that the religious hypothesis is obviously absurd, he should now be willing to subscribe to a Scotch verdict of "not proven." No more than that has been argued for in this chapter. If religion has been proved, beyond a shadow of reasonable doubt, to be a decaying vestige of superstition, we are morally obligated to discard it at once. But if the question is still what debaters call a "live" one, it deserves further investigation. I have tried to suggest that there are no grounds for dogmatically assuming the religious hypothesis to be untenable. This is quite different, please observe, from showing that the hypothesis is correct. Those who agree that I have achieved my much more modest aim should be willing to read the following chapters with an open mind.

CHAPTER II

BELIEF IN HUMAN VALUES

OPENING one's mind to the possibility of religion is a more positive step than might be supposed. Belief is like a river. We can anchor ourselves against the current, but once we pull up the anchor we are swept steadily onward. The man who no longer feels that he is forbidden to believe will generally end in believing. "This is not true of me," I hear someone say. "My mind is open, but nothing happens. Religion is a personal matter: it goes with a kind of mentality which I do not possess. I simply have no religious sense." Are you sure of that? The root of all religion is a feeling of devotion to something higher than ourselves. Complete absence of this feeling is very rare among decent specimens of *genus homo*, and you would have small respect for anyone who lacked it. Do not condemn yourself too hastily.

What we call a "great" man is one whose life is consecrated to an ideal which transcends his own selfish interests. Not many of us are truly great in

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this sense, but every fully evolved human being gives more of himself to *something* than he will ever be paid for in hard cash, or fame, or influence. For some men the object of devotion is their business firm; for others, it is the family. The statesman gives himself to the nation; the social worker, to the mass of humanity. A more concentrated, and hence sometimes a more powerful, impulse of devotion is expressed in hero-worship. All really great men, and some very little ones, are surrounded by unselfish admirers whose attitude is basically religious. Many lives are consecrated to art, and many to science. Some are moved by a kind of patriotic loyalty to physical nature. "My job, or my family, or art, or science, is my religion," men are fond of saying. And in a rudimentary but important sense these *are* religions. They imply some degree of sacrificial devotion; they elevate the character of the devotee; they do an immense amount of good in the world.

Such devotions include an element of faith. We may be able to account for them rationally; but we never think of the reasons until we are called upon to produce them, and there is always a feeling, above and beyond the reasons, which we are unable to express in words. The people, institutions, or activities to which we consecrate our

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powers are always better to us than we can prove them to be. Experiments which to the scientist are almost holy may be futile or repugnant to the great majority of men. Not in spite of evidence, but beyond evidence, we believe in the objects of our devotion because our nature impels us to do so and because we have found that obedience to this impulse gives us happiness and peace and a clear aim in life. Moreover, the power which these objects of devotion exert upon us lies largely in their undemonstrable element. If I could ever explain exactly why I believe in literary scholarship I should no longer be a scholar. My work is a spiritual force in my life precisely because all my arguments in behalf of it fall so far short of its real meaning. Yet the real meaning in no way conflicts with the arguments: it merely transcends them. It is, as we say, "beyond words."

But it is difficult to think very long about these loyalties without being drawn a little further. The object of the business man's religion is not the firm as it actually is, a muddle of good and bad: it is the firm's honesty, or its fine workmanship, or whatever makes it worthy of unselfish service. What fool would consecrate himself to the United States just as it exists in the year 1935? It is a vision of what our country *might* be that the patriot serves.

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The hero-worshiper does not adore a pot-bellied functionary in a silk hat: he bows down before an ideal of personality. Since human beings in the mass are profoundly unattractive, the philanthropist must be inspired by some abstract notion of human happiness. No artist worships his palette: he worships beauty. No scientist worships his test-tubes: he worships a dream of objective truth. What man could adopt an attitude of devotion toward the physical universe unless he regarded it as the embodiment of a conception of universal law? In short, our objects of devotion are not really things, persons, institutions, or activities, but ideals abstracted from them. These are what we mean by "the higher values," though some are obviously higher than others.

Be as tough-minded as you please about these values. Think of them, not like Plato, but like Aristotle—not as the only real things, but as generalizations drawn out of everyday life by the human mind. Assume that they are merely expressions which we find convenient for linking together certain elements that run through the higher levels of our experience. Try hard to suppose that they have no relation to the thoughts of a God. The fact remains that man's consecration of himself to ideals is basically religious. Perhaps these values

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are wholly of our own creation. But, once created, they become stronger than we, like genii produced by an incantation. We give ourselves to them; we measure our conduct by the standard they establish; we subordinate our personal cravings to them; we feel them as impersonal forces on which we are somehow dependent; we have faith in them, and our faith makes us better men and illumines our existence.

Those who never go beyond a sincere, warm belief in the worth of the higher human values have found something very precious which no one should seek to destroy. Unfortunately, it is difficult to maintain the religion of human values successfully without going beyond such a religion. We cannot do with less than this, but we cannot keep even this unless we have something more.

It is hard to formulate a religion of human values clearly enough to make it permanently solid and workable. If we dwell solely on the abstract ideals, they melt away into thin air. If to prevent this we pull the ideals back into concrete experience, they are lost in the welter of things from which they have been abstracted. This religion will not "stay put."

The devotion of which we have been speaking is often squandered on unworthy objects. Nothing is

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more common than to see a man struggling to idealize something which will not provide the necessary material. In such a case faith does not transcend the facts: it vainly denies the facts, and the outcome is despair. The world is full of thwarted idealists whose value-religions have inverted themselves into cynicism.

The religion of human values is obviously subjective. What is beautiful or true to me may be ugly or false to you. There is no bond which will unite us in striving toward a definite goal. It may be said, moreover, that a fully developed religion of human values is the private possession of an intellectual aristocracy. Doubtless the simplest and most ignorant of men have obscure, undefined feelings of devotion toward aims above a merely utilitarian level. But such a religion, if it is to fulfill its possibilities, demands a considerable power of abstract thinking and a fairly high degree of articulateness. Also, if it is not to be mere day-dreaming, it requires the ability and the opportunity to do interesting, significant, creative work. Professor Einstein can achieve a value-religion which would be incomprehensible to his bootblack. Both could worship God; only the Professor can worship relativity.

The orthodox believer is often reproached for

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having definite ideas about essentially mysterious matters. But he is only trying to cultivate what are generally regarded as intellectual virtues—clear thinking, precise definition of terms, saying exactly what one means. It is better to attempt this than to flounder in a sea of undefined concepts. An assertion of belief in God may be more respectable intellectually than an assertion of belief in “sugar and spice and all things nice.” When we hear a liberal non-Christian idealist orating on “the higher things of life” we sometimes fear that he is trying to obtain a religious thrill without having a religion. At all events there is no deadlier bore than the man who is constantly prating about ideals. The intellectual haziness of the religion of human values renders it liable to affectation, sentimentalism, and word-mongering. The cult abounds in parlor-prophets who are more “inspirational” than inspiring.

Yet when someone declares that men should abandon the struggle toward the higher values and be content to act like the animals they really are, my respect for this sort of religion begins to return. The view that man should behave like an animal is usually advanced by those who want man to behave like an animal of a lower species than that to which he belongs. We do not advise a dog to be-

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come a coyote, and we should not advise a man to become a monkey. Man is a curious sort of animal. He interprets his own environment and apparently exerts some control over it. His mind reaches back into the past and forward into the future. He is conscious of his finiteness and yearns toward infinitude. He reasons, loves, dreams, creates values for his own inspiration. Any genuinely realistic view of the human animal must include these facts. The harm produced by misdirected, overstrained idealism, great as it is, is infinitesimal compared to the consequences of surrendering our intellectual and spiritual birthright in the endeavor to be "natural." We are beasts, yes, but let us act like beasts of our own species. An old student wrote me the other day: "I have not prayed for years, but time and again I have bit my lips to keep from doing so." Though an enemy of inhibitions, she seems to have inhibited one of her natural impulses rather seriously. We cannot become fully human by trying to be less than human.

In Aldous Huxley's *Point Counter Point*, the character who functioned as the author's spokesman seemed to recommend a healthy sub-human animality as the best antidote for perverted idealism. But in Huxley's later novel, *Brave New World*, the hero rebels against the soulless mechanical

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Utopia of science by asserting higher imaginative values symbolized by Shakespeare's *Tempest*. He comes to a tragic end, but we honor him for trying to be a man in a world of machines. A religion of human values is far better than no religion at all. We cannot surrender it without relapsing to a lower animal species than that to which we belong. Let us hold fast to it, then, while we ask whether an honest man is justified in taking any further steps along the road to belief.

CHAPTER III

GOD AS CREATIVE MIND

IN religion as in science, the mind struggles through complexity and multiplicity toward simplicity and unity. Thus from moral values we can abstract an ideal of the good; from intellectual values, an ideal of the true; and from æsthetic values, an ideal of the beautiful. These three visions enlist the religious devotion of many high-souled men. They form the Trinity of the non-Christian idealist. The analogy with the orthodox Trinity is close, for though in a sense the supreme values are three, in another sense they are one. Perfect goodness is true and beautiful; perfect truth is good and beautiful; perfect beauty is good and true. They are three in one, one in three. What name shall be assigned to the ultimate triune abstraction? Some have called it the Absolute; some, the Unknowable; some, the One. And some have quite simply called it God.

A religion of one supreme value certainly has more solidity and power than a religion of miscel-

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laneous goods and truths and beauties. It is also more mature intellectually, since in order to achieve it we must pursue a train of thought to its conclusion instead of stopping half-way. No thoughtful person can begin to abstract values from the Many without being led to a contemplation of the One.

“But this is just an idea that we have made up.” Even if that objection expressed the whole truth of the matter, we could still urge that the creations of human imagination may become mighty and beneficent forces in human life. But what do we mean by “making up” an idea? Whence came the materials, whence the impulse and the power to shape them into a form so far beyond anything that we can actually see and touch? It is easy enough to regard our everyday conceptions of value as man-made; but when from these we rise to the thought of perfect goodness, truth, and beauty, and from these to the thought of one ultimate perfection, then we are struck by the feeling that a super-human Value may be the origin as well as the goal of human values. We dimly wonder whether man would ever have created God if God had not created man. It is hard to believe this, but even harder to believe anything else.

Is there any rational basis for the unquenchable

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feeling that God is more than a figment of human imagination? The universality and intensity of this feeling in normal persons make it rash to assume that it finds no correspondence in reality. It has also been urged that our persistent consciousness of human temporality, finitude, and imperfection implies the existence of something eternal, infinite, and perfect. Or we may say that no phenomenon can be explained except in relation to some more general principle, that there must be some final self-explanatory principle which explains everything else, and that this final principle cannot itself be part of a nature in which nothing is self-explanatory. Some believers ask how the processes of nature could ever have begun without the impulse of a causeless cause external to nature. Others insist that the rational order displayed in the universe cannot be the product of unconscious mechanism, but must represent the workings of a divine mind. Still others, going further, point to evidence of moral purposiveness in nature as a proof of God.

And what is to be done about those who have asserted that they know God exists because they have actually felt his presence in a moment of mystical contemplation? They form a difficult body of witnesses. For them the experience has been the

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realest thing in their lives, yet they cannot prove its reality to us. On the other hand, we cannot disprove its reality. To the great advantage of true religion, psychology has shown that some "varieties of religious experience" are partly or wholly pathological; but it cannot possibly conclude that all mystics are liars, madmen, or epileptics without falling back on its own great dogma—the unproved assumption that such things simply do not happen.

True or false, the mystical experience is extremely rare. But thousands upon thousands of simple believers who have never felt the mystic's rapture will declare that they know God exists because of the peace, strength and joy which they have won through belief in Him. If there is anything in the philosophy of pragmatism, such evidence is weighty. The sceptic may retort that *any* ardently cultivated self-delusion would have worked equally well. But let him show us another self-delusion which has been the light of the world for nineteen centuries, and which has never betrayed a believer whose faith was pure. His argument, indeed, is circular. We cannot brand a belief as self-delusion until we are sure that it does not work. So far as belief in God is concerned, we are sure that it *does* work. We might even apply the negative control so greatly valued by the scientist

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and add that *disbelief* in God does *not* work. Or, employing the logician's "method of concomitant variations," we might say that the stronger the faith in God is, the better it works, and the weaker it is the more poorly it works. The apostle of the most influential modern school of philosophy is the author of *The Will To Believe*.

Of course no one can demonstrate God's existence, for the very idea of deity implies qualities and powers which transcend human comprehension. The arguments have probably never convinced anyone who did not have a desire to be convinced. But the same can often be said of arguments in other than religious fields, and he who declares that belief in God is wholly without rational basis had best look to the rationality of his own assumptions. As for me, I see much force in the familiar arguments which I have so briefly outlined. They represent several different lines of thought, none of them inescapably convincing in itself, but all converging toward something that is real, each telling a part of one whole truth.

My own faith in the existence of God, however, was originally arrived at through incredulity. As is already beginning to be apparent, I can believe a good deal; but I am simply unable to believe that man arose from a natural world which was not

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the work of one supreme creative Mind. To feel the full force of this doubt, it is necessary to agree with the scientist that man is the outcome of natural evolution. Is he the *final* outcome? The believer need not shrink from the implications of that question. No one has more reason than he to hope and believe that man will change very greatly as the centuries pass. Even if he evolves into what science would call a new species, from the religious viewpoint he will remain man—a rational, volitional, morally responsible being. The universal movement will merely be carried onward—how much further one cannot guess.

Now what is the nature of the movement so far as we are able to observe it? It consists of development from the mechanical or inorganic to the vegetative or vital; thence to the animal or sensory; thence to the personal or rational. From stones to trees, from trees to beasts, from beasts to men. To me this process looks orderly, purposive, rational, moral, and beautiful; that is, it has all the essential qualities of a great *thought*.

For us, great gaps still exist between the world of stones and the world of trees; between the world of trees and the world of beasts; and between the world of beasts and the world of men. Each stage possesses qualities and powers which could hardly

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have arisen from the next lower stage without the impulse of some conscious volitional force. But the religious person has been too prone to stake his faith on the width of these gaps. Science has narrowed them considerably, and is throwing slender bridges across them. There can be no real doubt of the continuity of nature. Man was indeed made out of a little handful of dust.

Man is always potentially, and sometimes actually, a being of high wisdom, nobility and beauty. Man is a part of nature. Why are these statements, both of which are obviously true, generally set against each other like fighting cocks? Why not admit them both, place them together, and see what happens? In picturing man as a part of nature along with stones, trees, and beasts, science has altered our traditional conception of him; but it has equally altered our traditional conception of nature. The inclusion of man within nature transforms nature into the system which produces Shakespeare. Is religion destroyed thereby? We are now wearisomely familiar with the almost human behavior of the best apes, and with the almost apelike behavior of the worst men. The lesson has been salutary, and we should be grateful to science for it. But having learned that lesson, may we not remind ourselves of the possible glory and joy of

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humanity? Look through my study windows out upon the university which I serve, and ponder all that it stands for as a focus of human aspiration and power. My colleagues and I are embarrassingly close to the anthropoid apes; but when we try to imagine a university of monkeys, a little of our self-respect returns. Let us think more nobly of man. In so doing, we are led to think more nobly of the nature which includes him.

The supreme possession of man is mind. I am not at all concerned to deny that the rudimentary germs of human mentality may be discerned in the lower animals; indeed, I should be delighted if they could be discerned in plants and stones. They must somehow be latent there if mind is to be brought within the evolutionary process. Mind, it seems to me, can arise only from mind; it takes an idea to produce an idea. The process by which a moral and intelligent human being arises from inanimate nature is a great thought, and a thought presupposes a mind that thinks.

Hence I take my stand with those who assert that whatever else God may be, He is a Mind. Creation—which, rightly regarded, includes evolution—may then be thought of as an act of creative imagination, the gradual expression of an idea, the utterance of successive words which make

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coherent sense. "Let there be light" may have the same hypothetical quality as "Let x and y be two points on a circle." But we cannot improve on the opening verses of the Gospel of St. John: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not." We can indeed never comprehend it, but we can dimly imagine an intense mental activity which expresses itself in the universe as we know it. The Mind which thus externalizes its thought is no more identical with the universe than a poet's mind is identical with his poem, although it is immanent throughout the work. And we must suppose that Divine Mind *keeps on* thinking: the continuation of the universal movement depends on that. The universe, like any uttered chain of thoughts, is a sequence of symbols representing God's ideas, which are the only reality.

God's ideas, mind you—not our own fragmentary guesses at truth. We cannot suppose that all our thoughts are God's thoughts. God thinks of men who can think for themselves, and who there-

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fore think very imperfectly. But in all reverence we dare assert that even our imperfect thoughts give us some inkling of what the divine mental power may be like. When we create systems of knowledge, transform life through poetic imagination, or rise above pain, fear, and bestiality—then we get a taste of the complete freedom and power which is God's. If God is Mind, we possessors of human mind have something godlike in us.

“But why do you assume that mind is at the bottom of everything merely because it appears to be at the top of everything? Is it not much more likely that matter is the *prius* of the universe? What reason is there to suppose that those mental activities and values which you prize so highly are of any real importance in the system of nature?” The difficulties raised by these questions, grave as they are, are less formidable than those in which the materialist involves himself. He cannot reduce mind to a function of matter without using his mind. John Caird writes: “You cannot get to mind as an ultimate product of matter, for in the very attempt to do so, you have already begun with mind. The earliest step of any such inquiry involves categories of thought, and it is in terms of thought that the very problem you are investigat-

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ing can be so much as stated. You cannot start in your investigations with bare, self-identical, objective facts, stripped of every ideal element or contribution from thought. The least and lowest fact of outward observation is not an independent entity—fact minus mind, and out of which mind may, somehow or other, be seen to emerge; but it is fact or object as it appears to an observing mind, in the medium of thought, having mind or thought as an inseparable factor of it. Whether there be such a thing as an absolute world outside of thought, whether there be such things as matter and material atoms existing in themselves before any mind begins to perceive or think about them, is not the question before us. If it were possible to conceive of such atoms, at any rate you, before you begin to make anything of them, must think them; and you can never, by thinking about atoms, prove that there is no such thing as thought other than as an ultimate product of atoms. Before you could reach thought or mind as a last result, you must needs eliminate it from the data of the problem with which you start; and that you can never do, any more than you can stand on your own shoulders or outstrip your own shadow.”¹

¹ *Philosophy of Religion* (New York, 1894), pp. 88-89. Quoted by permission of Jackson, Wylie, and Co.

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We can perceive nothing, we can reason from nothing, except the contents of our own minds. This fact, of course, does not prove that mental power is the *prius* of the universe. What it does prove is that, *unless* mental power is the *prius* of the universe, human mind is merely an accidental freak of nature; that all our thinking is foredoomed to frustration; that nature is at best indifferent and at worst hostile to all the values which justify our existence. We must think, and we must think as men. Is thought an energizing creative power, or some inexplicable disease of atoms?

We are confronted by two hypotheses—neither of them provable, neither of them disprovable, neither of them easy for our reason to accept. Yet, once the problem has been presented to our consciousness, we must choose between them. Even if our choice is never explicitly expressed, we must live as if one or the other were true. Either human consciousness is the useless by-product of unconscious natural forces, or it is the result of a divine creative consciousness which wills that man should arise from the world of rocks and trees and apes. Though the infinite advantages held out by the latter hypothesis should not be accepted as a bribe, the strictest intellectual probity need not force us to accept the former hypothesis merely

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because it is both the more repugnant and the less credible. The idea of God as creative mind strikes me as the less inconceivable of the two alternatives, and no demonstrable facts bar the way to affirming it. Hence I accept it as a working hypothesis the truth of which can be tested only by its fruits in the thinking and living of man.

CHAPTER IV

FREE WILL

ONE who has tentatively or finally accepted the idea of God as Creative Mind will naturally ponder the implications of this belief. How, for example, does it bear upon the vexed problem of free will?

Obviously man possesses no absolute freedom to form decisions and act on them. I am not free to speak to my wife at this moment, for we happen to be two hundred miles apart. I am not free to rub my left foot rather than my right, for my left foot has been missing since the World War. In more complex situations, too, our decisions are vetoed or restricted by circumstances which are mightier than they. The apparent victories of the human will over heredity and environment are rare; and quite possibly they are the result of determining forces which, though hidden, are stronger than the more obvious hindrances.

The most that man can assert, then, is that he has, in certain situations, a restricted freedom of

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choice between alternatives. A common view is that when nature presents us with an opportunity to choose, we *can* choose. We must then accept the inevitable consequences of our choice, which will sooner or later present us with another opportunity for free decision—and so on down an endlessly forking road. But this is a dubious compromise between fate and freedom. If man is wholly included in determined nature, how can he claim the slightest degree of exemption from its laws? A clockwork mouse cannot choose what strip of carpet it is to run on. A machine that *occasionally* makes up its mind is the dream of a madman. What reason is there to believe that I am any freer to choose the left-hand road, which leads to Albany, than to choose that I shall find Boston at the end of it? True, we constantly *feel* that we are making free decisions. Nature *looks* as if the power of voluntary conduct grew with each main stage of evolutionary development. It is hard not to believe that trees are freer than stones, frogs than trees, chimpanzees than frogs, and men than chimpanzees. “Sir, we *know* our will is free, and there’s an end on’t!” cried Dr. Johnson. But of course we know nothing of the sort. The determinist will answer that as forms of life become more and more complex the laws which govern them, though

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never losing their grip, become too subtle in their interplay for the human mind to trace. What we take for freedom is only ignorance.

This deterministic assumption is an act of faith arising from the desire for a universe of unvarying mechanical simplicity which will exclude all supernatural elements. But this desire, even in those who feel it most strongly, conflicts with a deeper and stronger desire. One vital difference between faith in freedom and faith in determinism is that the former can be acted upon and the latter cannot. Two well-known intellectuals, H. L. Mencken and Joseph Wood Krutch, have independently declared that their attitude toward the question is pragmatic: man is almost certainly determined, but he must continue to behave as if he were free. But is this genuine pragmatism, or a *credo quia impossibile*? These men, who believe in a universe which leaves no room for freedom, wilfully adopt an assumption which would destroy that belief if it were valid. In substance they are saying that the needs of the human spirit transcend the apparent facts—a viewpoint which would disgust them in a religious believer.

It is not surprising that men whose minds have fabricated a determined universe should shrink from their own conclusions. To the intellectual,

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creative brainwork is the greatest joy in life. When by free thinking he reaches the conclusion that such thinking is impossible he is in a difficult position. Usually a great lover of liberty, he finds that he has doomed himself to utter slavery. He is not helped much by saying that there is no real danger that all our acts can ever be explained deterministically. So long as he grants that complete knowledge *would* provide such an explanation, he has deprived his own life of its motivating impulse. His mind has committed suicide. If more than a few members of the faculty of my university genuinely believed that they were ants in an ant-hill, what would happen?

But this problem is not confined to the intellectual class. The man in the street would also find that an absolutely determined existence would not be worth the living. There would be physical, intellectual, emotional and moral chaos. Man would live like a beast—but less happily, for a beast is not conscious of the futility of his consciousness. Terms like “art,” “courage,” and “love” would be meaningless. We should deserve neither praise for “good” actions nor blame for “bad” ones, since that freedom of choice which is essential to moral conduct would be abrogated. My picture of such a state, however, is not so much one of active horror

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as of frozen inaction. There would be no valid motive for doing anything at all. Convinced of the futility of volition, we should wait passively for some natural force to push us in one direction or another. Those forces, which require to be seized upon and used before they can mean anything for man, would bubble aimlessly in our dead minds, and the result would be zero.

“But surely people who disbelieve in free will at present do not lead the life that you have been describing!” That is because their practice is quite unrelated to their theory. They live by assuming the possession of a power whose existence they deny. It may be said that this situation, though intellectually absurd, is a satisfactory *modus vivendi*. But the force of a repudiated belief cannot last forever, and there is reason to fear that some day practice will catch up with theory. In some lives the gap is rapidly closing, or has already closed; you are invited to observe the results for yourself.

A special word here for a group which I greatly like and respect—the ardently radical students of our colleges. Let them go on agitating for social justice, protesting against war, parading the streets in behalf of academic and other freedoms. With all their eccentricities and extravagances, they are

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the hope of the future. But I wish they could bring themselves to realize that they cannot deny free will without branding their own aspirations and activities as the futile chattering of little monkeys. They cannot simultaneously be cynics and saviors of society. Modern reform is in danger of stultifying itself because its leaders do not genuinely believe in human freedom. Robots will never be set free by robots.

For our own sake, then, let us not too hastily assume that there is absolutely no rational basis for belief in free will. We ourselves put into nature's mouth the words of the answers which she gives to our questions. Those "natural laws" which we are in danger of allowing to enslave us are formulated by our own minds as tentative explanations of apparent facts. Far from being absolutely static, they vary with our own mental activities. No doubt a real universe exists independently of what we may think about it, but our knowledge is merely a guess as to what that reality is like—a bundle of hypotheses which undergo constant revision. When we call the universe "a vast machine," we draw a crude analogy between it and something that we ourselves have made—quite as crude an analogy as that involved in thinking of God as a vast man. We may be sure that, if the universe is a machine

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at all, it is unutterably different from any neat little gadget that we are able to devise.

As I said in my first chapter, the new physics has dealt severe blows to the naïve mechanistic determinism of earlier days. A new feeling of creative freedom is abroad, and reputable scientists are picturing the universe as the mental construct of a super-mathematician. The believer should beware of pinning his faith on some particular theory which will probably be refuted in a year or two. Yet although the new science has by no means assured us of free will, it seems to be creating an atmosphere much less inimical to human hopes than the science of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Common sense stubbornly points to the triumphs of the human mind as evidence of free will. Lincoln, struggling upward from ignorance and poverty; Beethoven, composing his symphonies in defiance of deafness and mental misery; Helen Keller, transforming even worse handicaps into victories—are such as these the puppets of blind forces? What strange freak of chemistry enables a man to throw away his life for an abstract principle? The determinist can offer explanations; but we shall continue to think that, whatever Hugh Latimer's endocrine secretions may have been, it

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would have been much easier for him to writhe and recant in the flames than to "play the man." We religious people are a credulous lot, but some of science's fairy-tales are too much for us.

Freedom to triumph implies freedom to fail, and perhaps man's failures provide even stronger evidence than his victories. The higher life rises in the evolutionary scale, the more chances there are of making mistakes. Perfectly successful adaptation to environment is chiefly a prerogative of the lower orders; and on the human plane it seems more characteristic of uncivilized than of civilized man. The sentimental primitivists of the eighteenth century dwelt tearfully upon the happiness of birds, cattle, and Noble Savages under Nature's guidance as contrasted with the unhappiness of the civilized European, who by the misuse of his free will has tarnished the innocence of the Golden Age. They were wrong in their conception of happiness, but at least partly right in their observation of the facts. Disease, insanity, greed, pride, hypocrisy, bigotry, conscious cruelty, perversion of normal instincts—these are doubtless the fruits of natural evolution, but man alone possesses them in all their ripeness. No tiger is emotionally maladjusted until placed in a typically human situation—behind bars. Perhaps, as nature rises toward the human level, her

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laws not only become more complex but gradually loosen their grip, leaving man at least relatively free to make a fool of himself.

Although these considerations justify rational doubt of the deterministic assumption, they are far from establishing the existence of free will. No inferences drawn from the data of sense-perception will validate this essential human need. But belief in God as Creative Mind solves the problem at one stroke. The perfectly free mental power of God has willed a universe in which obscure potentialities of freedom slowly flower into the human joy and peril of choosing. Free will without God is a desperate hope; with God, it becomes as obvious as daylight.

The necessity of free will as a justification of human existence thus provides a strong impulse toward belief in God. Here, then, appears an intellectual temptation which deserves analysis. In my days of atheism, I resented the evangelistic appeal which runs: "Without belief in God, free will, and immortality, human life is a meaningless agony. Now this possibility is too repugnant to be conceivable. Do you *want* to be miserable? Well then, shut your eyes, believe, and be happy." To such onslaughts of pious salesmanship my reply was: "The surest means of driving me away from your

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faith is to try to scare or bribe me into it. Of course I do not want to be miserable, but how do I know that what I want bears any relation to what I can have? From my own experience and that of others, I can draw no evidence for believing that anything is too horrible to be true. For all I know, human life may quite possibly be a meaningless agony."

But once I began to think harder about these matters, my attitude underwent a partial change. A more realistic psychology hinted that a large element of "wishfulness" entered into all constructive thinking, and that too strong a suspicion of the validity of human desire might paralyze all power of thought, not merely on religion but on every subject. I began also to doubt whether any universal and deeply human longing could ever have arisen, or could continue to exist, without relation to some corroborative truth in the real universe.

At the same time I became impressed with the difficulty of regarding the universe as a nightmare. Despite the immense amount of pain and misery, it seemed obvious that there is more good than evil in the world, and that the good, once we lay hold upon it and use it, displays a kind of "actupon-ability" which evil lacks. The good never "lets us down"; evil, in the long run, always does. The rational basis for interpreting the universe as

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friendly to human hopes seemed quite as strong as the basis for despairing negation. I began to feel the stirrings of an impulse of intellectual, moral and spiritual self-preservation. Having always considered myself a facer of facts, I now faced the fact that I was inevitably a man. As a human being, I was entitled to think of the world as fit for the habitation of my species.

I still feel justifiable distaste for the "believe unless you want to be miserable" argument, and I do not intend to use the necessity of human freedom as an evangelistic threat. If belief in God itself depended upon belief in free will, to argue for the latter from the former would be absurdly fallacious. I cannot honestly say that in my own thought I arrived at belief in God quite independently of my longing for free will. That longing was doubtless an important factor in my desire to seek and find Him. But instead of vitiating my thought, desire may, as often happens, have given it strength and direction. At any rate the arguments advanced in the preceding chapter for the existence of God do not demand previous acceptance of the idea of human freedom. We have now moved onward from belief in God to the justification of free will by that belief. Once free will has thus been justified, it undoubtedly adds strength to

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our belief in God; but I see no reason to reject this reinforcement of faith merely because free will is infinitely desirable. So long as our desires do not conflict with verifiable facts or inescapable processes of logic, in the realms of thought which lie beyond the senses we may as honestly seek happiness as despair.

We must ask, however, what *sort* of free will is validated by belief in God as Creative Mind. The only perfectly free will is the will of God. Therefore, the more fully we understand God's will, and harmonize ourselves with it, the more nearly we shall approach the complete freedom of His mind. Christ told His disciples that if their faith was strong enough they could move mountains. "Strong enough" means "as strong as the will of God." Since the material universe is the outward symbol of God's thought, it is wholly subject to Divine Will. Its apparent independence is merely contingent and permissive. God's thoughts, to be sure, cannot be self-contradictory, but our imperfect minds must not presume to judge the Divine Mind by standards which we regard as logical merely because of our ignorance. We cannot know God's thoughts, but we must believe that whatever He thinks is true. Reality is the thoughts of God, and God can think whatever he pleases. Although

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no such freedom can be attained by any of God's creatures, man has enough of the divine in him to justify the belief that growth in faith would mean growth in mental power. In a state of perfect faith our minds would be so completely attuned to God's mind that in some slight measure our freedom would be akin to His. One of the great paradoxes of religion is that the freest possible human mind is the mind which has utterly subjected itself to the mind of God. "His service is perfect freedom." But this subjection should not be interpreted as a relaxation into flabby passivity. It demands hard thinking and deep feeling. It is a quest, a struggle, an adventure. Before we can prostrate ourselves before God, we must fight our way to Him through the world.

Free will, then, does not imply anarchic liberty to think and do as one pleases. Let us review the links of our reasoning. Some degree of power to choose between alternatives is necessary for a genuinely human life. Our desire for such power is validated by belief in a Creative Mind that thinks a universe which generates this power as it evolves. The mind of God must be absolutely free; the mind of man is obviously restricted in its freedom. Those restrictions can be surmounted only to the extent to which we believe in the divine origin of

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the power we possess and actively harmonize our desires with the omnipotent will of God. Doubtless we are meant to carry this striving toward divine freedom to the furthest possible limit. What the limit of this quest may be, within the circumstances of human life, we cannot tell. There is plenty of evidence that the human mind which has established firm contact with God's mind can win amazing victories. The truly free man is not the sceptic, who denies his own power; but the believer, who affirms his own power and acknowledges its kinship with the power of God. The possession of faith may be a sign, not of human weakness, but of human strength. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you *free*."

CHAPTER V

IMMORTALITY

EVEN the sketchiest survey of the arguments for and against belief in immortality would be out of place in this slight reflection of personal experience. The reader who investigates the subject for himself will at least be bound to admit that a future life is more than a sentimental daydream. The philosophical and scientific rigor of such a book as W. P. Montague's *The Chances of Surviving Death*, for example, demands respect. And—to mention alleged evidence of a different kind—beneath the quackery and superstition which have done so much to discredit “spiritualism” there remains a residue of deeply impressive phenomena.

But doubtless Harry Emerson Fosdick was right when he asserted in a recent sermon that immortality cannot be proved as an isolated proposition. It belongs, as he said, to a great family of religious ideas, all of which lend support to one another. A more orthodox preacher might have added what I now regard as true—that we cannot feel absolutely

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certain about any of these ideas without the support of revealed Christianity. But even the religion of natural reason is sufficient to justify a confident acceptance of these fundamental conceptions. If one believes in God as Creative Mind, in free will, and in the sacredness of human personality, one naturally believes in life eternal.

Those who have accompanied me thus far are willing to agree, if only tentatively, that a Divine Mind wills the emergence of the organic from the inorganic, and of the conscious from the unconsciously organic. The culmination of the process is man, who, though part of universal nature, is to some extent capable of controlling his environment and of improving his own character. As has already been suggested, we should think more nobly of man than we do. But our pride is soon checked by extremely unpleasant facts. Man is curiously half-baked and intermediate; he looks like a transitional stage in a process which has not been completed. He can be summed up only in a perplexing series of antitheses: carnal and spiritual; determined and free; foolish and wise; ridiculous and sublime. Without reference to a supernatural origin and a supernatural end, man simply does not "make sense."

The complete emergence of the spiritual from

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the material, of the conscious from the unconscious, of the free from the determined—that is an idea both inspiring and rational. But stopping somewhere in the midst of that process is meaningless. Indeed, it is worse than meaningless, for it imputes to the Divine Mind an ironic cruelty. From the dark earth the seeds of human values send up tender green shoots. Buds of love, imagination, justice, wisdom, freedom, take form. They open just enough to disclose a glimpse of the potential goodness and beauty of a fully developed human personality—and then fall to the dark earth from which they came. Need the human mind imagine so hideous a frustration? Is it not more reasonable to suppose that if God has a great idea, He is capable of thinking it *through*? I choose to believe that the universal process is not truncated, but completes itself in a realm of full consciousness, full freedom, full spirituality.

Belief in immortality is needlessly hampered by a kind of layer-cake dualism which often infects the expression of religious feeling. In this life our bodies are so important that the grave looks absolutely final—too wide a ditch to jump. Death, burial, the decay of the flesh, seem to mark a definite period. The grave, however, may not be very important to a God who is more interested in spirit

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than in flesh. Death probably represents a deeply significant step in our own development, but perhaps it is not that wild leap from one world to another which we find so difficult to imagine. Let us think of one continuous, eternal existence in which death is not altogether unlike graduation from college.

But what is it that continues beyond the grave? When we speak of immortality, we really mean the survival of individual human personality as such. Prating about the indestructibility of matter as an argument for eternal life is a pseudo-scientific bluff. Nobody cares whether the mineral salts in one's body are eternal or not. The question is whether human personality can be thought of as a real thing in itself. If so, it is not inconceivable that it may survive the grave. But if personality is merely a term that we apply to a medley of psycho-physical factors which depend on the body for their united existence, then the dissolution of the body is the end of personality.

There is a real difficulty here which no honest thinker will try to evade. For me, however, the question can be answered in the light of premises already laid down. Reality is whatever exists in God's mind. His thoughts are the only truth. Many of His thoughts are apparent to our senses,

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but many are not. Now consideration of the world in which we live very powerfully suggests that God is aiming us toward freedom, toward the higher human values, toward the development of full, rich, beautiful, strong, unique personality. Well, if those are the things that He is interested in, those are the things that are real. When we speak of a man's personality we are speaking of something that is precious in the sight of God, and there can be no firmer criterion of reality.

I should not care to argue that human personality contains no perishable elements. My view is rather that the *determining factor* in personality is something inherently deathless. The tendency of religious modernists to substitute the term "personality" for the old-fashioned "soul" has caused some confusion. For me, soul is what a human being makes of the mental power which descends to him through nature from God. It is a private share of Divine Mind which acts as the unifying and energizing element in that larger psychophysical complex called "personality," but which receives an individual stamp through its functioning in a single human life. As related to Divine Mind, it is real, holy, and eternal; as related to man, it is uniquely personal. This is the undying aspect of human personality.

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Doubters will now press forward with questions as to the conditions of life beyond the grave. I do not know the answers to those questions, nor does anyone else. The strong feelings aroused by belief in immortality can be expressed only in images drawn from human existence, and therefore inadequate. We make up poems about the after-life. Some of those poems are revoltingly crude, but some are so beautiful that they deserve provisional acceptance as satisfying the needs of the spirit. I shall not try to force any particular body of images upon the reader. For me, life beyond the grave is the continuance of the human soul in God's memory. This is not a shadowy conception for those who share the view that to be a thought of God is to exist. If God remembers us, we continue to live as truly as we lived on this earth, though under different conditions.

This does not mean the return of our souls to a general reservoir of divine consciousness, in which all individual differences vanish. God possesses in His own nature all the pure, abstract mind that He wants. His concern is rather that absolute mind should become individualized into human soul by expressing itself through personality. All truly great souls are characterized by distinctiveness of flavor. To be imperfectly distinguishable from

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other people is to be weak and insignificant. If God did not want individuality, why did he ever set the universal process in motion? And having begun it, why should he reverse it? The supreme value of this life may be raised to a higher plane, but it will not disappear.

Furthermore, memory implies images. God will continue to picture us in a form which is real to Him though imperceptible to human sense. Those spiritual bodies may bear some resemblance to the bodies which our souls inhabited upon earth, or they may be utterly different. The question is of greater concern to us now than it will be when we have passed on. If only individual consciousness remains—and a soul without individual consciousness is a contradiction in terms—our spirits will be able to recognize the spirits of those whom we loved on this earth no matter what form has been granted them.

That there are gradations of spiritual freedom and illumination in the after-life is an attractive supposition. It helps to convert the dualistic leap over the grave into a progressive evolutionary flow begun on earth and continued in heaven. It also enables us to describe the after-life in terms of growth, thus relieving it of the static and unstimulating perfection which is distasteful to many

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minds. I think, however, that I could stand a good deal of perfection if only I could find it. We should not wish heaven to provide a repetition of the muddled striving which characterizes our earthly life: on all its levels it must be the abode of peace. But perhaps there is an increasingly full communion with the spirit of God. Hence recurs the question whether, if there is growth in the after-life, the culmination of that process may not be the complete absorption of our being into God's being. Perhaps, however, as our spirits grow, the richness of God's nature for us increases proportionately. Even in the fullest conceivable union of the soul with God, there would always be a distinction between Creator and creature. We may imagine a relationship faintly similar to what Christians believe of the Trinity—complete personal distinctness within complete oneness. To become one with God is not to lose individuality, but to find it.

Does a religion of natural reason lead us to think of the after-life as a place of rewards and punishments? Surely God is not vengeful or cruel; He does not surround us with theological puzzles and then torture us eternally for failing to solve them. He forgives the sincerely repentant, makes allowances for weakness and ignorance, gives due credit for well-meant errors. Even granting that

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He once offered man a complete revelation of Himself, it is impossible to believe that He condemns those who, without having seen the glory of that revelation, live the good life.

On the other hand, unlike many amiable people, I cannot think of God as a supreme sentimentalist. I hope and believe that Divine Mind possesses the power of discrimination, and is free from the fallacy that everybody and everything is as good as everybody and everything else. It is inconceivable that eternal life should be granted on exactly the same terms to the coward and the hero, the wilfully vicious and the innocently mistaken, the kidnapper and the child who is his victim.

The old-fashioned gloating over "sinners in the hands of an angry God" has done terrible injury to the cause of true religion. But no less harm has been done by the wishy-washy notion that harps will be granted to all of us quite without regard to the use we have made of our opportunities in the earthly life. God will form an opinion of us—which is perhaps all that the theologian can mean by "judgment." The quality of the after-life which we lead in His memory will be affected by that opinion. He may remember us with sorrow, or with tolerance, or with joy. And we shall most poignantly feel that opinion—not in the flesh, but

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in the spirit. To be one of God's happy memories is to be in heaven; to be one of His sorrowful memories is to be in hell. Our souls may be given a chance to grow in the after-life. We must not suppose, however, that death will automatically erase the spiritual consequences of what we have done on earth; and the most sanguine trust in God's mercy cannot silence the reasonable fear that for some souls eternal life will mean an eternity of God's displeasure. Belief in immortality is a demoralizing indulgence of sentimentalism unless stiffened by the realization that our life on this side of the grave will in some measure condition our life beyond it.

Belief in the essential fact of immortality is a legitimate inference from ideas which, I hope, I have already shown to be both rationally tenable and necessary for a fully human existence. But in the foregoing speculations about the nature of the after-life, and the conditions on which its highest privileges are granted to man, God has taken on certain personal attributes which do not necessarily belong to our fundamental conception of Creative Mind. Whether this development represents anything more than a kind of myth-making will depend upon the reader's attitude toward the problem to be considered in the next chapter.

CHAPTER VI

SAYING WHAT WE MEAN

SHOULD we keep our religious ideas as general and abstract as possible? Or should we try to make those ideas concrete and specific, expressing them in a clear externalized form? Nowadays many thoughtful people prefer the former course. In their opinion, a tolerant, philosophical, and spiritually pure religion must be a vague one; an externalized and specifically formulated religion, besides being intellectually absurd, is the agent of bigotry and superstition. So strong is this view among "advanced" thinkers that I must confess to a twinge of shame at having turned in the opposite direction. Let me try to justify myself.

I doubt whether we can genuinely believe in the religious ideas which have been set forth in the preceding chapters without trying to give our beliefs a definite outline. In every other sphere of thought, precise ideas are more valuable than vague ones, and there is no reason to suppose that religion is exceptional in this respect. We do not

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really possess an idea until we have expressed it, and once we have given our thought the word we must use other words to clarify our meaning. This applies not merely to the communication of thought, but to the formulation of thought within our own minds. Some shadowy hypnotic satisfaction may be derived from repeating the statement, "God exists," but it signifies nothing until it has been furnished with specific content. What do we mean by "God"? What do we mean by "exists"—does He exist like a tree, or like music, or how? On what grounds is the assertion based? How far do its implications for you agree with those which others might draw from it? What ideas as to the relations between God and man does it justify? The simplest assertion of belief on the part of anyone who is capable of thinking at all sets in motion some such chain of questions. We must think onward as clearly and coherently as possible, resolving always to remain in charity with those who find different answers. Rousseau was quite right in saying that those who form no judgments will never be mistaken, but man has continued to use his poor brains as well as he could. The only way of evading the necessity of thinking about God is to define Him as "that of which nothing intelligible can be said," and such a God could have no existence for

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a mind whose function it is to make intelligible statements.

Thus far we have regarded the formulation of religious belief as an intellectual process. Needless to say, however, it includes a large emotional element. Creative Mind, free will, and immortality cannot be sincerely and deeply believed in without generating emotions which call for expression. If you tell me that you have a strong feeling without any desire to externalize it, I shall bluntly call you a liar. But how can we express our emotional response to religious ideas? Although it is absurd to say that religion lies completely apart from the domain of analytical reason, nevertheless logic can never wholly exhaust the content of religious experience. We feel as well as think; and our feeling naturally attaches itself to concrete sense-impressions and expresses itself through them. The believer is dealing with facts which are different from the facts of science, and which demand a different mode of thought for a completely valid interpretation. It might be called rational imagination, or imaginative reason. When we strive to give body and outline to religious ideas, we do so in response to strong emotional promptings. Our impassioned minds are grappling with what no eye has seen, no ear has heard. Inevitably, therefore, we have re-

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course to metaphor and symbolic imagery, comparing the super-sensuous to the sensuous, the inexpressible to the expressible. We can never know what God *is*, but once we believe in Him we are forced to imagine what He is *like*. The process, as has often been said, is similar to the creation of a poem. Like the religious believer, the poet is haunted by emotions which he is irresistibly impelled to express. Those feelings issue forth in images related to objects of sense-perception which are seized upon as concrete external symbols of the inward emotional state. Heine, confronted with the purity, fragility, and evanescence of maidenhood, undergoes an emotional experience which cannot be *denoted* by logical terms, but may be connoted by "Du bist wie eine Blume." That is true—in the same realm where the great religious symbols are true. Every poetic metaphor is an act of faith; every act of faith, an exercise of creative imagination. The religious person, like the poet, feels himself to be in possession of truths whose highest values transcend logic, but which must somehow be expressed. And, again like the poet, the more strongly he feels the more he tends to embody his feelings in those concrete images which are the natural voice of passion. No purely abstract religion ever arose from strong emotion, or aroused

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strong emotion in others. It is impossible to say: "With all my heart, mind, and soul I love and worship—a stream of tendency, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness.'"

But here let us guard ourselves against a serious misconception. Only those who think religiously of poetry are entitled to think poetically of religion. They must regard the poet as a seer, inspired to some extent by forces external to himself; they must regard the poetic interpretation of experience, not as a pastime of fancy, but as a sensuous reflection of a super-sensuous reality. Many features of formulated religious belief may be thought of as poetically symbolic, but unless we sincerely believe that they are symbols of vital truths we are debauching our minds with a feeble æstheticism. If we bear this warning in mind, the analogy between poetry and religion is sound and fruitful.

Everyone who has a *religion*, as opposed to a merely abstract religious *theory*, composes a sort of poem about God. But how is this private poem related to those composed by other individual believers? How are all these subjective lyrics of faith related to the great folk epics, as they might be called, which represent the collective religious consciousness of large groups? And how are these epics related to the universal poem which God

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Himself has given us? Whatever the answers to these questions may be, the individual's expression of religious belief can no more be independent of the beliefs of others than a poem can be written in a language intelligible only to the poet. For the desire to give our religion a definite embodiment has a social as well as a personal motive.

People who have felt the force of religion in their own hearts want to project that force outward into the world of men. They cannot keep it all to themselves. There are good tidings to be shared; there is a great work to be done. Pallid metaphysical abstractions can never effect this result. To be understood, an idea must be defined and clarified; to convince others, it must be illustrated concretely and applied to human experience; to arouse those feelings without which cerebration is powerless, it must be given a beautiful imaginative form.

The gregarious impulse operates as strongly in religion as in other human activities. We want to belong to a great society of believing souls. Our personal faith gains strength from, and adds strength to, the faith of others; we are glad to join our fellows in offering up to God the communal prayer of humanity. Call it crowd psychology if you like. Is it wiser to stifle an instinct than to ac-

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cept it and turn it toward a noble end? There is no reason why man, the social animal, should associate only his baser nature with the gregarious impulse. It is equally natural for him to seek a communal expression of those ideas and feelings which represent his highest potentialities. This sharing of faith demands a common body of propositions expressed through a common symbolic convention. A congress of metaphysicians, each with his own personal religious abstractions, and with nothing in common but a distrust of metaphorical language, would not constitute a society of believers.

Just as the sharing of poetic experience demands that the poet must to some extent subject the uniqueness of his vision to the viewpoint of those to whom he would impart it, so the sharing of religious faith may demand some compromise between our private views and those of the believing society. In this matter individuals differ widely. Some—the Gertrude Steins of religion—spurn the very thought of compromise. They will owe nothing to anyone else, and they insist on speaking in their own private language at whatever risk of loneliness and unintelligibility. Others—the Edgar Guests—are so strongly dominated by desire for harmony with the group that they surrender al-

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most everything of their own. In my opinion, any compromise as regards the basic essentials of faith is a grievous sin. But if the believing society has expressed these essentials in a certain way, the individual need not demand that this outward expression should agree in every detail with the workings of his own religious imagination. If the communal form is in most respects suited to his spiritual needs he may, without the slightest hypocrisy, accept the whole form for the sake of what, through this acceptance, he can give the believing society, and what the believing society can give to him.

There may, as in almost every aspect of life, be need of adjustment between the individual and the group, but there is no inevitable conflict if only the group's expression of belief is sufficiently broad and humane. The ideal situation occurs when the individual accepts the communal form, while the group grants the individual a high degree of freedom in his interpretation of the meaning of that form provided his belief in the essentials of faith is firm and definite. Nor is this ideal impossible of attainment. St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Francis of Assisi were both "good Catholics," but how widely they must have differed in their personal religious experience!

With rare exceptions, the assertion that organized communal religion unduly interferes with the

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spiritual life of the individual is made by persons who are notably deficient in spiritual life. One might as well say that sincere poetic feeling cannot be expressed in the sonnet form. Is the genuinely spiritual person he who isolates his faith from the rest of mankind, or he who lends his faith to the making of a great religious world-poem? The sharers of faith are not impoverished by accepting the symbols of social belief. On the contrary, those whose personal religion is richest are usually those who most assiduously cultivate the communal expression of faith. The true poets of belief are able to write in rhyme and metre without any sacrifice of individuality. The stubborn fact is that most religious people have a religion, and crudely go to church. There, in the highest types of worship, communal and personal religion are harmonized. The attendant at mass takes part in a general sacrificial offering, but he is urged also to interpret the service in the light of a private "intention" which makes the offering a deeply personal one. Similarly, the great poet at once expresses his own emotions and the universal emotions of humanity, pouring his unique inspiration into a nobly conventional form which is thereby made more than merely conventional.

Personal faith gains strength from a widespread

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communal faith, and communal faith in turn gains strength from tradition. That is why genuinely religious people hesitate to discard a venerable symbol even though its precise significance may have altered in the course of time. The arbitrary manufacture of up-to-date symbolism is like simplified spelling: it is an endeavor to substitute a mechanism for an organism. In the religious advertisement columns of the *New York Times* there used to appear a notice reading: "Blank's Philosophy—not better, not worse, but *different*." Whether Blank's philosophy has flourished beyond all need of advertising, or whether it has succumbed to the depression, I cannot say. The notice has not appeared for some time. Let us try not to smile at Mr. Blank. If he felt irresistibly impelled to found a different religion, he was right to do so. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that the little group of disciples who sat at the feet of Mr. Blank, whatever benefits they may have derived from his "message," lacked the intellectual and emotional impact exerted by a world-wide, age-old religious tradition.

It happens to be Sunday morning as I write these words. The church-bells of the village have just begun to ring. All over the world they are ringing, even as they have rung for centuries. If

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the tradition which their tolling represents is not a gigantic error, he who harmonizes his personal religious experience with it will find that his own faith is deeper and stronger than if he labored to give it a "different" expression. And if this poem of faith is, however imperfectly, a reflection of God's own masterpiece, if it has been composed by mankind in response to the promptings of a divine inspiration, then its claims upon our imaginations are imperious. In that case the society of believers, past, present, and future, becomes more than a group of men whose collective judgment is to be respected: it becomes Holy Church, which speaks as one having authority. It cannot make me false to the dictates of my own spirit, but it can indicate the channels through which my religious impulses may best move outward to my fellow-men and upward to God.

But I have begun to talk rank Christianity, and for that we are not yet prepared. What I had intended to urge in this chapter does not demand acceptance of any one form of organized religion as divinely instituted. As beings who think, who express subjective feelings in objective imaginative symbols, and who desire to share their most precious experiences with others, we are impelled to give our beliefs some definite shape. Only when

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they have been rendered specific and concrete can they become real forces in our own minds and in the world of men. The dangers of error are great, but they must be risked. Faith is not safe and cosy: it is a perilous adventure of the mind. We cannot truly believe in any sort of divine power without asking ourselves what it is like, how it reveals itself to us, and what relations exist between it and mankind. A "creed" is simply an assertion of belief that certain answers to those questions are within human limits the right answers; that our symbols are not the sport of fancy, but shadow forth a rationally imaginative glimpse of eternal verities, and parallel in some degree the symbols in which God's own thought is clothed; that we have not, after all, so much composed a poem of our own as produced a work of creative appreciation, a reconstruction within ourselves of the poetic truth of the universe.

CHAPTER VII

OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN

IF the arguments of the foregoing chapter possess any cogency, we are justified in thinking onward toward a personal creed. Now since we cannot get outside of our human minds, we must, in attempting to imagine the nature of God as specifically as possible, use materials drawn from our knowledge of humanity. God is an unembodied spirit, not a man; but for us an analogy between that spirit and the highest conceivable ideal of human personality provides the only means of describing deity. Imperfect as this analogy must necessarily be, it may be regarded as more than a mere figment of subjective fancy. Nothing can be willed unless it exists vividly as a mental impression, and the contents of the Divine Mind constitute reality. If, then, the mind of God wills that the finer human qualities should arise from nature, God must possess those qualities in the highest degree. Otherwise God would be inferior to His own creation. Hence we may think of God as a being of absolute

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wisdom, freedom, power of creative imagination, justice, mercy and love. When we speak of God as personal, we are thinking of pure personality, not of personality as exhibited in and through a human body. Far from imputing to Him the blemishes of humanity, we imagine a supremely great character that possesses in perfection the noblest mental and spiritual traits which we possess in imperfection. Thus the shadowy conception of Creative Mind assumes the form of a Creative Personality who may be envisaged as the Father Almighty.

But how can a world so abounding in sorrow, pain, and evil represent the thought of a loving God? The familiar answer is perhaps as good as any. We cannot survey the whole of life from the eternal and omniscient viewpoint of God. Our knowledge is fragmentary; our desires are selfish; we do not know what it is good for us to have. Our existence even on this side of the grave is a mystery to us; and about the after-life, with its infinite possibilities of fruition, compensation, and healing, we know nothing. What seems evil to me may be good in relation to the universal design.

This is more than a merely sentimental assumption. In a remarkable letter, Keats refers to this life as "the vale of soul-making." The man who

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has a truly great soul has struggled, suffered, and achieved a spiritual victory over the bitterness of things. He has experienced both good and evil, and has often willed to choose the former. At other times he has sinned, repented, and tried to make amends. His body has known pain, but his mind has brushed it aside as unworthy of much attention. He has seized upon sorrow and used it for a means of growth in self-discipline and sympathy. Battered by the world as he is, he has gained the knowledge that at the heart of all this mortal coil lies a great peace. There he stands like an old tree at timberline, gnarled and windswept and inexpressibly lovely. This is what God wants. I cannot imagine a world better adapted to soul-making than the beautiful, terrible world which He has given us to live in.

What kind of supervision does God exert over the affairs of men, and to what extent is He willing to help them? The game of soul-making is played according to rules which God abrogates only under exceptional circumstances that are beyond our comprehension. Man is supposed to live the good human life in a world of unvarying natural laws which in themselves are indifferent to his interests. His free will can be used to further his understanding of those laws, but not to exempt himself from

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their operation. As an intermediate and ambiguous creature, commanded for his own good to struggle against that nature of which he is a part, he inevitably makes mistakes. The result is what he calls evil—sorrow, pain, disease, death. These are not visited upon individuals as separate arbitrary decrees of God: they are merely consequences which God allows to arise as corollaries of the universal process. Just as His thought has endowed man with some measure of free will, so it has granted nature the power to operate with a strange blind freedom of its own. God does not will evil, but for our good He wills a world in which human suffering is always possible and sometimes inevitable.

It is not inconceivable that a man might acquire, through complete faith, enough of the divine creative imagination to be able to exert some degree of mastery over the material world. There is plenty of evidence that such power has sometimes been vouchsafed to those who were worthy of it. We must remember that God is above all the apparent rules of human existence, and that He can place us above them if such is His will. Nevertheless, we must continue to play the game of soul-making as it has been devised for us, and for all practical purposes we may feel absolutely sure of being held to the full rigor of the rules. Prayer for rain is justi-

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fiable as an assertion of trust in God's absolute power, but not as a request that meteorological conditions be altered for the special benefit of the farmers of Cayuga County.

Is there, then, any sort of divine help on which we can confidently rely as we struggle through this world? I believe that there is. The outward circumstances of our lives are immeasurably less important than our response to those circumstances. It is not what happens to us, but how we think, feel, and act in relation to those happenings, that really counts. Happiness does not depend on what we get; it depends on how we "take" what we get—on our power to extract spiritual values from experience. In the development of this power God stands always ready to help us. He will seldom or never interfere to shield us from the material evils which arise from the processes of nature, but He will guard us against moral and spiritual evil if we call upon Him and make His will our own. He will strengthen in us the creative spiritual force which is our inheritance from Him. Few if any of us have the right to hope for a faith so pure and strong that it can control the material conditions which surround us, though all of us should aspire toward such a faith as the ultimate goal. But everyone may expect to obtain, in answer to his prayers,

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that inward elevation of the soul which is the only real necessity for a happy life. Thus every material ill includes the potentiality of spiritual good, and may contribute to soul-making, if we meet it by drawing upon the divine energy. How do I know all this? Because, like millions of other men, I have tried it.

What are our obligations toward such a God? Even those who are not Christians may accept the answer given in the Catechism: "My duty towards God is to believe in Him, to fear Him, and to love Him with all my heart, with all my mind, with all my soul, and with all my strength: To worship Him, to give Him thanks: To put my whole trust in Him, to call upon Him: To honor his holy Name and his Word: And to serve Him truly all the days of my life."

From these obligations toward God arise certain obligations toward mankind. We see in every man an element of divinity, so that all our fellows are sacred to us. We feel it our duty, as far as we can, to love other men as God loves us. We are all bound together in a common relationship to God—brothers of one great household. The resultant impulse toward ethical conduct is of tremendous power. It is questionable, indeed, whether a high standard of morality is possible without some sort

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of religious faith. We cannot be fully human without aspiration toward the super-human. You may object that many unbelievers lead highly virtuous lives. But such men are moved by strong subconscious religious impulses; or, if not themselves religious, they live according to habits which owe their existence to the influence of some religious tradition. We can be good without explicitly declaring that we believe in God, but not without acting on the implicit hypothesis of God's existence.

What do religious persons mean by saying that their faith gives them *peace*? The essence of religious peace lies in the reconciliation of conflicting emotions. Life without religion is an insane turmoil of passions which drive us here and there like a ship in a storm. Today we know that we are wise and good, and we feel joy in the mere fact of being alive; tomorrow we shall loathe existence, and curse ourselves for being so weak, stupid, and vicious. In our attitude toward nature, feelings of fear and kinship, of subjugation and mastery, bewilderingly clash. But belief in God transforms this chaos into a complex but harmonious composition of light and shade. No longer pulled apart, we find poise in relation to one central truth diversely manifested. Of course we are afraid—who would not be afraid of an all-knowing, all-power-

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ful Spirit whose essence is inscrutable? But our fear is balanced by our grateful love for the Father who will give us spiritual help if we turn to Him in the spirit. Of course we are strong and beautiful and wise—are we not the children of God? Of course we are weak and ugly and stupid—are we not struggling through the vale of soul-making, half-way between the wholly bestial and the wholly spiritual? Thanks to our faith in God, we know what we are, where we came from, where we are going, and what our life is for. This knowledge is religious peace. Far from being a quiescent state of lazy smugness, it is active, alert, delicately balanced. It implies tension, though not conflict. We ourselves must be constantly at work to maintain it.

The non-Christian is often perplexed and even revolted by the Christian conviction of sin and its attendant longing for salvation. Something closely analogous to those ideas, however, is provided by a religion of natural reason without the authority of Christian revelation. The sense of sin is merely the feeling which inevitably afflicts us when we contrast our actual selves with an ideal of perfect humanity. We are oppressed by the knowledge of our enslavement to the non-spiritual; we feel that we ought to escape from this bondage, but that we cannot escape without the aid of a power greater

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than we. Although the story of Adam is obviously a myth, it expresses the truth that man, through misuse of the precious but perilous gift of free will, has fallen far below his highest possibilities. Salvation means rising above this fallen condition into spiritual freedom and peace. It is to be obtained from God through active repentance, through good deeds (which cannot really be good unless they are expressions of faith), and through faith (which is never genuine unless it issues forth in good deeds). Or if even this sounds too theological, let us say that we are obviously not what we should be, and that we might become much better than we are if we raised ourselves to full human stature by faith in God. That is the essential meaning of sin and salvation.

In this matter it is necessary to maintain a just emotional balance. We all know men whose overpowering conviction of sin makes their religion gloomy and morbid, a source of despair to themselves and of disgust to others. Nowadays, however, the opposite extreme is much more common—namely, the sentimental notion that God, man, and nature are simply too sweet for words, that there is really no such thing as sin, and that if only we will read plenty of third-rate inspirational poetry we will realize that we are in heaven al-

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ready. The truth lies in a harmony of these extremes. We need a heartfelt conviction of our shortcomings, transformed into a source of inspiration by the living faith that God will raise us to higher things if only we will call upon Him.

The same undogmatic common-sense will explain the Christian's vow "to renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanity of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh." This implies, not that all life on this side of the grave is necessarily vile, but that nature is devoid of goodness except as viewed in its relationship to God. The "devil" is man using human powers for sub-human ends—intelligence without goodness, freedom without faith. This world is "wicked" unless regarded as the thought of God. The desires of the flesh are "sinful" unless we interpret flesh as the earthly home of spirit. The believer, then, renounces merely the soulless world of unbelief; he loves and enjoys the world that God has made. Of course individuals differ in the speed with which they can profitably advance in this life toward that complete spirituality which awaits them beyond the grave. A man must find for himself that equilibrium between flesh and spirit which will provide, for him, the good human life. But the essential fact for everyone is that the world is

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beautiful and good to the extent, and only to the extent, that it is believed in as the vessel of divine beauty and goodness.

Finally, let us consider the implications of the metaphorical statement that God is our Father, and that we are His children. What relations, ideally speaking, exist between a father and his young son? (To avoid verbal awkwardness I shall leave the mother out of account, though some religious persons would insist that the analogy is incomplete without her).

As an animal issuing forth from the world of nature, the child is the mechanical and fleshly product of a mechanical and fleshly act; but he is also the spiritual fruition of a spiritual desire. He is the father's love made flesh, a little miracle of incarnation.

The father loves his son with a yearning love which is too deep to be merely sentimental and indulgent. It can become very stern when the boy—as invariably happens—falls below the parental ideal of what he should become.

But although the father makes innumerable demands upon the child, he gives far more than he receives. Money, time, comfort, personal ambition—all are sacrificed that the son may flourish. If it will help the boy, his father will suffer physical

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agony or even lay down his life. As for spiritual agony, that is the inevitable accompaniment of fatherhood.

The father's love, then, is wholly unselfish. His supreme desire is, not that the child should become a mere replica of him, but that he should develop a rich, strong, beautiful, human personality of his own. If this is to happen, the child must increasingly work things out for himself, assume responsibility, and learn by experiencing the consequences of his own actions. By depriving him of all freedom of choice, it might be possible to shield him from terrible harm, but only at the cost of preventing him from becoming a man. Yet the boy is never entirely "on his own," for his freedom is exercised within the limits of a world controlled by paternal intelligence. He is no more alone than he wants to be; when he turns to his father for help, the help is always ready for him. In the parent he finds a model for imitation, a source of advice, encouragement, and consolation. Gradually he learns that in the long run his power over things is greatest when his thought is most in harmony with the thought of his father. "How would Father feel about this?" he asks himself. "How would he wish me to behave in this situation?"

The father's teachings are progressively adapted

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to the unfolding intellectual and spiritual capacities of the child. Without ever telling his son a lie, he presents the truth in a succession of graded symbols which from time to time are revised. There is a gradual shift from an "old dispensation" of outward discipline to a "new dispensation" of inward discipline. "Go to your room!" gives place to "Let's talk this over together."

The essence of the relationship between father and son is spiritual. Only in rare instances, however, can spirit commune directly and immediately with spirit. The son is seldom aware of his father's love as something to be contemplated in the abstract, apart from all physical circumstances. The father's love descends to the child through concrete channels: the fairness and helpfulness of their daily intercourse; the father's spoken and written words; music, painting, and literature; schools, clubs, and churches. In short, the father's love is revealed through the forms of life with which he surrounds his son. These forms include a thousand habit-making details which are repeated again and again, for the father knows that the right kind of outwardness stimulates the right kind of inwardness. The boy raises his hat to women for years before he understands why women deserve men's respect, but the external habit will have prepared

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him to grasp the reason for the habit. "Yes, father." "May I leave the table?" "Let me carry that for you." Just forms, but not empty forms, for the father fills them with his spirit.

When we look back upon our own childhood, we remember that some special family custom, repeated faithfully over a long period of time, provided the fullest and sweetest revelation of parental love. The romp in father's bed in the morning or father's good-night visit to our bedside, the walk in the park on Saturday afternoon, the summer fishing-trip, even the gift regularly brought home from the city or the ritualistic joke. Our parents were sometimes amused at the importance we attached to such observances, but for us their significance was sacramental. They molded the intangible into a pattern that we could grasp.

The boy thinks of his father under three aspects. First, as the august and somewhat remote head of the family; the stern, kind, loving teacher and judge. Secondly, as the good comrade who, without ceasing for one moment to be a father, becomes a big brother, working and playing side by side with his son. Thirdly, as a pervasive influence felt in the child's mind and heart even when the father is not present in the flesh. It is almost as if the child had three fathers in one.

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The father is so much wiser than the boy, and sees things from a viewpoint so much broader, that his ways are often hard to understand. Why should he be so infinitely kind in some cases, and so harsh in others? But despite such questionings, the child loves and trusts his father. Since the parent is kind and good in all matters which the boy can understand, he is doubtless kind and good in matters which lie beyond childish comprehension. Demands for special favors never cease, but they gradually come to mean: "Father, I believe in you; give me what is good for me to have."

The boy is proud to be his father's son. As his consciousness develops, however, he is often abashed to think of the tremendous gap between what he is and what his father wants him to be. He feels undeserving of so much love and sacrifice. This feeling, however, is no burden of despair, but a spur to efforts that will make him worthier of such a father.

I need not point out the inadequacy of the analogy between these relationships and those which connect man with God. Nevertheless, the metaphor expresses truths which demand expression, and which could hardly be externalized in any other way. It not only describes what might be called the common-sense of religious experience,

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but adumbrates such abstruser conceptions as the Trinity, the incarnation, God's sacrifice of Himself for man, the sacraments, free-will and grace, sin and salvation, progressive revelation, prayer, and ritual. Theology is less inhuman than is sometimes supposed. Even if these more detailed suggestions lay a heavier burden on the metaphor than it will bear, the basic contention of this chapter remains valid for all who think it desirable to give their religious ideas and feelings a definite, rationally imaginative form. We are entitled to think of God as a great Personality by believing in whom we may become fully human; as Our Father in Heaven, who loves His children and grants spiritual aid to those who turn to Him in the spirit.

CHAPTER VIII

CHRISTIANITY

No person who has been reared in a Christian civilization, even though he himself is not of that faith, can discuss fundamental religious ideas without making some use of Christian terminology, examples, and parallels. Nevertheless, the ideas sketched in the foregoing chapters do not demand the reader's acceptance of any doctrine peculiarly Christian. It is quite possible to believe all that has been set forth up to this point without being a Christian at all.

Imagine a group of people who, through natural reason, have been led to belief in the ideas which I have been expressing. If no existent form of religion provides a satisfactory expression of those ideas, it is their duty to found a religion of their own. But if everything they believe has already been declared clearly and beautifully by an ancient and powerful religious institution, they would be wasting their time in trying to establish a church which is "not better, not worse, but different." Let

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us consider Christianity as a possible solution for their problem.

First of all, what *is* Christianity? For me, the indispensable core of Christian faith is that Jesus Christ was, simultaneously but without confusion of the two natures, complete man and complete God; that God assumed human flesh to reveal to us what God is, and then what man ought to be—to show us how to live and how to die. As the Son, He sacrificed Himself so that we may certainly know Him and believe in His love, and so that through this belief we may rise above sin and partake of the spiritual power which is the essence of life eternal. This definition will appear shockingly narrow to those who would grant the title of Christian to anyone who preserves a loosely amiable attitude toward the universe, is active in social service, and regards Jesus as a fine example of what a man should be. Probably it is vain to debate this matter. I shall only say that if Christ was no more than a very estimable man, we are guilty of gross superstition in worshipping Him. And if instead of worshipping Him we merely respect Him, we end in a vaguely sentimental cult of humanity, more or less bolstered up by a vaguely sentimental abstract theism. A church based solely upon admiration for the human qualities of Jesus and His

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simple ethical message—which in itself is not unique—has about as much spiritual joy and power as a good Shakespeare Club. The only strong, living Christianity is that which affirms the absolute divinity of Christ. The reader may disagree with me, but at least he now understands my definition of the term.

Christianity confirms all the beliefs toward which we have been dimly groping, supports them by the authority of an objective, historical revelation in space and time, gives them a clear focus and a sharp outline. It lends our faith the sweetness of world-wide brotherhood and the force of venerable tradition. Through the Scriptures, it gives us a divinely instituted ideal of human conduct and religious practice, and a poetic language for the expression of our feelings about the supernatural. But above all, Christianity gives us Christ—the light, the truth, the way, the Unknowable made known to us for our redemption. “That was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His Name:

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which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth."

This is all very beautiful, but what warrant have we for believing it? Some have argued that since men are entitled to interpret life in terms of spiritual values, Christianity deserves to be accepted as the most adequate of all such interpretations. Whether or not the Christian revelation is literally true, it deserves to be imagined as true. It has the truth which is beauty—all we know on earth, and all we need to know. This view is philosophically defensible, but it deprives us of the most precious element of Christianity—the idea that humanity and divinity actually met and harmonized in the being of Christ. A religion that we have imagined for our own delectation can never have the value of a religion that has been given to us by God Himself. At the very least we wish to believe that we have composed this great poem of faith with the help of divine inspiration.

It must, I think, be granted that Jesus did not deliver Christianity to us as a fully evolved sys-

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tem of dogma and religious practice. He gave us a body of materials to work on with our minds and hearts. To be sure, He provided not only the essentials of faith but clear indications of how those essentials should be developed and used in the society of believers which He founded through His apostles. His gift, however, did not relieve us of the necessity of thinking and acting for ourselves. He showed us the way, then left us to walk the way with the aid of the Holy Spirit—and with human freedom to err. Our obligation has been to make a Christian Church with the materials He gave us. We cannot be sure that we have always built in accordance with His will. On this earth, then, the organized expression of religious belief must and should be, to a considerable extent, the work of human reason and imagination. I believe, however, that the fundamentals of the Christian religion are true thoughts of God, and that all doctrines are true which can be shown to be necessary consequences of these fundamentals.

Here the leader may interject that Christianity as defined in this book is not only unprovable but utterly incredible. No matter whether we accept literally or interpret symbolically the Virgin Birth, the Transfiguration, the Resurrection, the Ascension, and the healing miracles, there is no blinking

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the fact that to be a real Christian demands acceptance of the most stupendous miracle of all—the Incarnation. This for me is not in the least incredible, since I define reality as the thought of God. We may be sure that His abrogations of the usual course of nature are neither capricious nor frequent, but we may be equally sure that nothing could hinder Him from entering, for a supremely great purpose, the world which His own thought had created. Our reluctance to believe in the Incarnation—and in the lesser miracles which are implied by it—is based upon an essentially superstitious reverence for the apparent machinery of the universe. If we cannot believe in its absolute regularity, where are we? The answer is that we can believe in God, who for our own good has placed us in a world of trustworthy natural law, but who in order to reveal to us the existence of a higher law made Himself flesh and dwelt among us.

Christianity cannot, of course, be proved by an appeal to scientifically verifiable evidence. The Bible will not positively establish the truth of Christianity except for those who believe in the inerrancy of the Bible, and no one can believe in that who does not already believe in Christianity. All the arguments from Scripture are circular, and there is no other objective basis for argument. Yet

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the Christian stubbornly insists that his belief is founded upon reality. It is not always easy for him to explain his faith, since to ask him why he believes is like asking him why he breathes, laughs, or loves his wife.

Here I must be frankly personal, for I cannot hope to set forth all the reasons which have led this man or that to accept Christianity. All of us go about in this world with our heads full of unanswered questions. Sometimes one of those questions is answered for us. A friend's remark, a sentence in a book, a thought that rises in our minds just as we are dropping off to sleep, and—Eureka!—we *know* that we have the right answer. It clears up the whole problem with crisp finality, fitting the gap in our thought like the last piece of a jigsaw puzzle. In the expressive slang of the day, it “clicks.” For me, Christianity *clicks*. It is a completely satisfying answer to all my questions about God and His relations with men. With such power, clarity, and beauty does it confirm and enlarge my own vague notions that to deny it would be to deny myself. It is not a working hypothesis which I coolly decide to adopt, but a torrent that sweeps me along with it. When I try to analyze this conviction, however, I see that it is a complex fabric, woven partly of rational and partly of emo-

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tional strands. Let me try to distinguish some of its elements.

In the first place, granting that God loves us and desires us to grow in moral and spiritual stature, some explicit revelation of His will seems altogether probable. He would wish to show us the origin and end of the game of soul-making—not granting us victory at the start, but showing us what the game is for and how it may be won. For this purpose, one unique self-disclosure in a definite period of time at a definite place to a definite group of people would be the only fitting means. As a teacher, I know the necessity of adjusting my lectures to the understanding of my various classes, and I know the pedagogical impotence of merely abstract statements. The author of the little poem,

“How odd
Of God
To choose
The Jews,”

was richer in wit than in knowledge of the history and character of the Hebrews. God, desiring to reveal to man His true nature, did what a great teacher would do. To just the right people, and at just the right stage in the history of civilization.

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He furnished a concrete example of the meaning of His sublime thought.

Further, if God's chief concern is that we should develop a strong and beautiful human personality, is it not fitting that the concrete example of His meaning should be such a personality? "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. This is the sort of being that man might become if he believed in My love and harmonized his will with Mine." To put it very crudely, the Incarnation is precisely what we might expect of God.

The *sacrificial* character of the Christian revelation is also inherently probable. Again we may refer to pedagogy: the Hebrews, who thought in terms of sacrifice, were given a sign of the sort that they were best fitted to comprehend. But the appropriateness of the Cross far transcends all historical considerations. As a symbol of suffering and victory, it conveys its full meaning to us no less than to the contemporaries of Jesus. Military men affirm, though they do not always act upon, the principle that an officer should never order a subordinate to do anything which he himself would be unwilling to do at the bidding of a superior. God Himself exemplified that rule when He came among us. We may reverently imagine Him as saying: "It is necessary for the growth of human

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souls that man should struggle and suffer. But I ask of you nothing that I am not ready to undergo. I, whose thought is reality, will think Myself into flesh and share your existence, showing you perfect life and perfect death that you may know My love. You find it hard to be brave, wise and tender in this difficult world? I, who have assumed complete humanity, will show you how to win the victory. Your backs are bent under heavy burdens? Give Me that cross; once and for all, *this* is the way to carry it. You shrink from pain? Drive those nails into My hands and feet. You fear that death ends all? Visit the empty tomb; then believe, and rejoice."

Some truly religious people withhold themselves from Christianity precisely because its revelation is so sharply localized in space and time. God, their argument runs, is everywhere at all times. He continuously reveals Himself in nature and in man. Now this belief in a permanent and universally diffused revelation is firmly held by all true Christians. They are told of it in the very words of Christ: "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, He shall testify of me."

The Comforter, the Spirit of truth, is the Christian way of expressing that aspect of God which

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non-Christian believers dimly feel in themselves and all about them. The difference is that the Christian is assured of the diffused revelation through the specific revelation which is the cornerstone of his religion. The non-Christian has no such assurance. His faith is at the mercy of outward circumstances and inward mood. In our weak minds, a God who is *merely* everywhere is terribly liable to become a God who is nowhere. Or if the faith remains ardent, its conclusion is pantheism—indiscriminate worship of the natural flux. God is revealed, not in evil, but in good. He is supremely revealed in Jesus Christ—our only guarantor of the Comforter and hence the only true means of union with God.

The only true means? What of the other great historic religions. Personally I cannot think that eternal life will be refused anyone who, whatever his declared beliefs may be, lives the good human life on this earth. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and the Christian who is sure of the unbeliever's damnation had best look to the state of his own soul. All that the orthodox Christian need assert is that his faith, without denying the elements of truth in other religions, includes all such elements and sums them up in a final and perfect form. Nor does this imply that God has been unjust to those

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of other faiths. One time, one place, one human vesture had to be selected for the unique disclosure of God's love. But the fruits of that revelation, in response to Christ's command to preach the Gospel, are being spread over the whole world. The illiberal and unimaginative spirit which has tainted much of our missionary work must never blind us to its vast importance. God wills a Christian world, and it is for us to make one. Meanwhile God can wait. He is very patient, and very merciful. Since it is His will that every man should be saved, we may be sure that every human soul, either here or hereafter, will have the opportunity to learn whatever truths are necessary for salvation.

"But at bottom," it is often said, "one religion is much the same as another. The outward forms differ, but the essentials are the same." As G. K. Chesterton observes in *Orthodoxy*, the real fact is just the reverse: the outward forms of the major religions are roughly the same, but their basic views are radically different. The immense superiority of Christianity to other faiths, both as a philosophy and a way of life, has been amply demonstrated. Jews, Mohammedans, Buddhists and Confucianists have often found complete happiness in Christianity, but no sane Christian who was not moved by a decadent craving for novelty

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or paradox could ever be a willing convert to one of the other historic religions. This fact cannot be ascribed wholly to the association of Christianity with the dominant type of civilization. Genuinely spiritual factors have also been involved. We must remember, too, that the best elements of European civilization have been furthered by Christianity quite as much as Christianity has been furthered by them.

Christianity seems able to tell the *whole* truth, whereas other religions give only partial glimpses. It is convincing because it embraces and harmonizes everything that enters into our religious impulses: the sorrow and joy, the weakness and strength, of man; the vileness and the holiness of nature; the severity and mercy, the inhumanity and the humanity, the awful separateness and intimate nearness, of God. Can any of its rivals claim an equal power to weld such complexity into such unity? Can this power be merely human in its origin?

No sacred book of any other religion will bear comparison with the Bible. When we abandon the doctrine of literal inspiration as the nonsense which it obviously is, and try to read the Bible like any other book, we find that we simply cannot do so. Many of its facts are fables, but its truths are of

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God. Its total impact on the mind and heart is one of transcendent wisdom, goodness, and beauty.

An impressive feature of the Bible is its continuity. Although it is the work of many hands, its essential theme is developed with astonishing coherence. First, the Old Testament, with man's understanding of God's nature becoming purer and loftier until the prophets sing of the coming Messiah. Those visions are fulfilled, and more than fulfilled, in the Synoptic Gospels, with their sublime story of Jesus' life and death. Then the infinitely precious Gospel of St. John, which first discloses the full meaning of Christ and His ministry. At last the spreading of Christianity as related in the Book of Acts, and the working of the human mind upon Christ's message in the Epistles. To read the Bible through is to retrace the entire unfolding of God to man. Furthermore, the Bible is, so to speak, open at both ends. Genesis looks back to the dim God-ward gropings of savages; the Epistles look forward to the whole subsequent development of Christian doctrine in the Church, and Revelation to all the visions of all the mystics. Unique as the Bible is, it fits into a rational scheme of intellectual and spiritual history.

What of the Christ who is portrayed in the Gospels? Place by His side any religious leader, any

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man at all, who ever lived. Is there not a tremendous difference, not only in degree, but in kind? That stooping down to little children, that towering up to the stars! Those closest to Him felt His divinity—were they victims of delusion? He Himself, when the time was ripe, declared the uniqueness of His relationship to God—was He a quack, or a well-meaning fool? Let those who would strip Christ of His divinity remember that no ingenuity of “higher criticism” will justify the idea that in the Gospels a stratum of miracle-mongering and eschatology has been imposed upon a simple story of a good human teacher who loved his neighbors. So far as we can see, the natural and supernatural elements are intertwined from the very beginning of the evolution of the text. We cannot accept or reject the man in Christ without accepting or rejecting the God. It must be all or nothing.

But for me the supreme evidence of Christ's divinity lies, not in the Gospels, but in human history. For twenty centuries, Christianity has proved its ability to effect a satisfying union of the spirit of God with the spirit of man. The same power is not possessed by other religions, nor is it possessed by alleged forms of Christianity which do not affirm the divinity of the Saviour with sureness and

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clarity. The fact that Christianity simply will not work without this belief is significant.

Although I have once or twice invoked the shade of William James in the course of this book I am not a genuine pragmatist, for I believe in the existence of absolute truth—the thought of God. A thing is true if it works, but only because a thing works if it is true. When a key fits into a lock, we know that we have the right key; but we also know that we have the right lock. No real key ever unlocked an unreal door. The power of Christianity is not a merely empirical inducement for acting as if it *were* true; it is the outward and visible sign of the fact that it *is* true. If it were not true, it would not possess the power.

Can we suppose that a delusion could have done what Christianity has done for individuals and for society? Consider the astonishing growth of Christianity, its ability to survive the errors of its adherents and the attacks of its foes. Consider what it has contributed to civilization, and the transformations it has wrought in human hearts. Consider its appeal to every age of history, every race and clime, every level of culture. If all this has been the fruit of a lie, where shall we seek a criterion of truth?

It may be objected that Christianity has also

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done a vast amount of harm. To feel, think, and act like a Christian, and to share in the building of a Christian Church, are difficult and perilous arts. Christ's message has often been monstrously perverted by morbid, eccentric, or mistakenly zealous minds. Hideous things have been done in Christ's name. The Church itself, as a human institution, has abounded in at least four of the seven deadly sins—pride, covetousness, anger, and sloth. But these evils merely represent man's frequent failure to be truly Christian. No candid person will argue that anything but pure good has resulted from pure Christianity.

Ask yourself what would happen in these bewildering times if every trace of Christianity, and all memory of its traditions, should suddenly vanish. Whether you are a Christian or not, would you care to live and rear your children in such a world? But even as it is the world is far from being genuinely Christian. Ask yourself also, then, what would happen if a living belief in Christ should suddenly become the guiding principle of all men and of all the governments of the earth. What would be the effect of such a conversion upon domestic relations, morality, economic disputes, international affairs, and human welfare in general? Can you conceive of any other form of religious

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belief that would work anything like the same transformation?

The richness with which Christianity satisfies and authenticates my own religious impulses; the inherent probability of an historical, personal, and sacrificial revelation; the superiority of Christianity to all other religions, and to all quasi-Christian perversions of its essential beliefs; the beauty, wisdom, and coherence of Scripture; the more-than-human majesty and loveliness of Christ as portrayed in the Gospels; the witness of history and of human experience to the validifying power of Christian faith—these are, for me, adequate grounds of conviction. No one of these taken singly is sufficient: it is the interweaving of all of them into one strong fabric of thought and feeling that overpowers my doubts.

My belief of course is strengthened by the knowledge that it is shared by millions of my contemporaries and millions of souls who have passed beyond the grave, and that it will be shared by millions yet unborn. In becoming a Christian I am not indulging any fantastic crotchet of my own, but am confirming and normalizing my own religious experience by merging it with the highest religious experience of mankind.

But there is something else of which I find it

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very hard to speak, for as a scholar I am more practised in expressing my ideas than my feelings. When the conviction which I have been trying to explain began to shape itself in my mind, I resolved to test it by an experimental year of Christian living. I tried my best—with rather complete lack of success—to live up to the ethical precepts of Christ. I thought much of God, and of my relationship to Him. I prayed and meditated. I studied the Bible, and followed a home-made course of readings in the history and philosophy of religion. I went to church—not as a mere spectator, but as a reverent worshipper. As a result, I fear I have become one of those irritating persons who say they *know* that Christianity is true. I have no words in which to describe what has happened. No mystical illumination has fallen to my lot, nor am I aware of any radical inward rebirth. But I think I know the truth of that text in the Epistle of St. James: "Draw nigh unto God, and He will draw nigh unto you." The world looks different to me, and I feel myself in some measure a different man. I have gained a peace and a happiness which I could never have created by my own unaided powers, and I believe that I have found God in my prayers. Anyone who reads this book can have the same experience if he seeks it. Until he seeks it,

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nothing that I could say of it would have any meaning for him.

Having become convinced of the truth of Christianity, I naturally determined to associate myself with some particular Christian church. And this is the final step which I hope some readers may be willing to consider. One can be a theoretical Christian without belonging to a Christian church, but not a practical one. For Christianity is a social gospel, and if it has really done its work in a man's heart he will feel irresistibly impelled to join his fellow-men in praising God. I believe also that the Church does something for a man which he cannot do for himself, though that is a question to be considered in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IX

SEEKING A CHRISTIAN CHURCH

WHEN we seek a Christian church, just what are we looking for? The supreme purpose of the Christian religion is to effect, through Christ, the union of man with God. The nature of this union may be described in various ways, all of them necessarily inadequate. It can be expressed in terms of mystical contemplation, of sacrifice, of thanksgiving, of communion in mutual love. For me it is a heightening and intensifying of man's spiritual energy by contact with the sacred Source of that energy, a lifting up of the heart toward God in order to obtain cleansing peace, joy, and power for good. If this is the aim of Christianity, the best Christian church is the one which most efficaciously furthers that aim.

Some will say that this is wholly a matter of personal taste. Creeds and forms of worship which are deeply satisfying to Smith may be deeply repugnant to Jones. But suppose that Smith is a lover of Shakespeare and Jones a lover of Edgar A.

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Guest. Jones has a right to his personal taste in literature, but cultivated readers have a right to say that his taste is bad. If he prefers a sentimental jingler to a poet whom all sensitive and imaginative spirits revere as a supreme genius, our admiration for his honesty must be tempered by regret for his crudity. Similarly with religion; if a particular form of Christianity could present definite evidence of its superior efficacy, there would be a religious obligation to cultivate it analogous to the cultural obligation of revering the greatness of Shakespeare. Jones might continue to prefer the church of Edgar A. Guest, but he should admit that his religious taste is limited, and that it ought to be improved.

There are two ways of dealing with a man who prefers Edgar A. Guest to Shakespeare: we may vilify the former, or display the beauties of the latter. Experience as a teacher leads me to prefer the second of these methods. Even when it fails it does no harm, whereas the other method seldom produces anything but resentment. Of course the two methods cannot rigidly be separated. Every word in praise of Shakespeare is implicitly a word in dispraise of Edgar A. Guest, and the temptation to clarify one's point by making the contrast explicit is frequently irresistible. On the whole, how-

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ever, it is better to present one's own preferences as winningly as possible than to attack our neighbors'.

Hence in the following pages my mode of expression is more relativistic than my faith. I merely describe that form of the Christian religion which I personally prefer because it does most to draw me toward God. Although I believe that above and beyond this personal preference there lies an absolute truth, I could not argue for this belief without indulging in negative and destructive polemics which might antagonize those whom I desire to help. Such arguments are avoided even to the extent of leaving my views unsupported by contrasts which might add to their logical force.

If despite all my efforts the ideas expressed still strike the reader as narrow, I can only say that modern religion might benefit from a certain kind of narrowness. The feebleness of present-day Christianity is largely due to the vaguely amiable willingness to embrace any attitude not definitely anti-religious. Real faith implies definite affirmations, and definite affirmations imply definite negations. Nowadays the union of churches is widely advocated. But we should discriminate between a union based on indifference to what one believes so long as one is kind and good, and a union based

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on full Christian faith. The former kind of union is often possible at this time. If neither of two denominations believes anything in particular, they may as well merge for the sake of efficiency and economy. The gain to religion, however, will be negligible. The latter kind of union is infinitely desirable, and every Christian should do his utmost to further it. But the prospect of such harmony is very remote, while the problem of finding a church in which to worship God is immediate and pressing for you and me. Hence although I have tried to be broad and charitable, I have by no means tried to write as if all churches were of equal value. I merely describe my own ideal of the Christian Church.

The Christian Church, in the first place, includes all genuinely Christian thought and feeling. If, as was stated in the preceding chapter, Christianity tells the whole truth about religion, the Church must tell the whole truth about Christianity. Her essential notes are balance, harmony, richness, and wholeness. Her strength is based upon the assertion of eternal spiritual truths, not upon reaction against transitory human error. She avoids angry, lop-sided emphasis on certain aspects of Christian experience at the expense of other aspects. In other words, the Church is potentially universal, preach-

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ing the whole of Christianity in all times and places to all sorts and conditions of men.

The Bible is itself the highest expression of the thought of this universal Church. If the comparison is not irreverent, we may think of the Gospels as somewhat like the Constitution of the United States. They did not make Christianity: on the contrary, they were made by the Christianity of the apostolic age. They form the indispensable documentary basis of our religion. We should follow them, but we cannot follow them unless we know what they mean. Far from being self-explanatory they have, at various times, conveyed widely different meanings to different persons. They require interpretation. Furthermore, if Christianity is not to fly into a thousand fragments, individual interpretations of Scripture need to be steadied, harmonized, and guided by the oral and written traditions of the Church, the consensus of expert theological opinion, the insight of the spiritually gifted, and the total religious experience of the believing society. In short, the "Constitution" of Christianity needs to be interpreted by the "Supreme Court" of Christianity, which has inherited the original ideals of the Church.

This is not the place for a discussion of the theology of the Christian Church. In my opinion, all

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her absolutely essential beliefs are expressed in the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and the Apostles' Creed. I must add, however, that my ideal Church affirms a view of salvation not held by all Christian denominations. I believe in salvation by faith, but I dislike certain implications of the "reformed" doctrine of salvation by faith *alone*. "The devils also believe, and tremble." The idea that a Christian can do nothing to make himself worthy of eternal life, that God the Father merely imputes to us the righteousness of the Son, thus simultaneously justifying us and branding us as utterly vile, is repugnant to me. I prefer the more rational and inspiring view that Christian belief and Christian living, inseparably concomitant, actually remake man into a being acceptable to God. The Incarnation made righteousness a human possibility. Our Lord has empowered the Church to proclaim through the sacrament of baptism, that the recipient has thereby become "a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven." This means, not that salvation has been assured him in advance, but that by God's grace it has been made possible for him to be good, to do good, and to enter into eternal life on his own Christ-given merits if he is true to the baptismal vows.

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It follows that my ideal Church, though duly emphasizing man's sinfulness, his need of salvation, and the vital significance of the Atonement, will preach a religion of joy and love rather than a religion of grimness and fear. She will cherish the thought of the forgiveness of sins, and will not forget that God lived for us as well as died for us. Above all, she will rejoice in the Incarnation as the supreme Christian fact—the union of humanity with divinity which may be shared, though in infinitely lesser degree, by all who believe that the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.

Do you think of "church" as a more or less casual association of like-minded people who join together for worship on Sundays and perhaps for social service on week-days? Or do you believe in one Holy Apostolic Church, founded by Christ Himself, entrusted by Him with the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments, and operating under the continuous guidance of the Holy Spirit? On this issue the two main types of Christianity are separated by a chasm which I am powerless to bridge. In my opinion the second of these views is fully supported by reason, by Scripture, and by Christian experience. Had it not become associated in the past with arrogance, bigotry, and persecution, its validity would prob-

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ably be obvious to the great majority of believers. Now that the Church has learned the lesson of tolerance, the idea can emerge in all its brightness from the dark clouds of oppression and revolt. If the aim of Christianity is to unite man and God through Christ, a divinely instituted universal Church which descends in an unbroken tradition from Christ Himself seems best suited to that purpose. For me the amply proved spiritual power of this conception is the chief, though by no means the only, evidence of its truth. "We believe," says Bishop Fiske, "that the Church is not an after-thought of men; it is the forethought of God."¹

On this question hinges the further question of the importance of the Church in uniting man with God. Does it merely add gregarious force to the individual's efforts, or is it the holy way to holiness? The latter view is implicit in the conception of one divinely instituted Christian Church. We cannot, however, go so far as to assert that the benefits of Christianity are restricted to those who have been formally enrolled in this society of believers. If the Church Visible were a perfect reflection of the Church Invisible, then indeed we might deny that any real Christianity can exist

¹ *From Skepticism to Faith* (Harper and Brothers; New York, 1934), pp. 65-66.

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beyond the boundaries of the Church. But, thanks to man's misuse of free will, every Christian communion is so full of imperfections that we cannot repudiate the Christianity of anyone who accepts Jesus as his Saviour. We may believe, however, that the way of Holy Church is the best and surest, though not necessarily the only way; that the grace of God normally descends to man through the Church and its sacraments; that these are the means which Christ has chosen to unite His children with Him; and that to neglect them is usually to fall short of the full joy and strength of Christianity. When embraced in a spirit of tolerance and charity, this view is a great source of permanence, unity, discipline, and energy.

The purpose of Christianity is to unite men with God through Christ, who lived and worked in a definite part of this earth at a definite time in history. The efficacy of the Church as a means of achieving the aim of Christianity is due largely to its descent, in an unbroken apostolic and sacerdotal tradition, from Christ Himself. Hence the importance of tradition in the thought of the Church.

Tradition has often been a means of obstructing truth, but it has also been a means of preserving truth and enabling it to grow coherently. "The dead hand of tradition" is a common phrase, but

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one could as accurately speak of "the living impulse of tradition." Think of the chaos that would ensue if the traditional element in all the activities of modern life should suddenly disappear! Where would modern science be without Newton, Darwin, and Faraday? Modern philosophy, without Plato, Aristotle, Bacon, Spinoza? Where indeed would be the modern hatred of tradition without the tradition established by the eighteenth-century *philosophes*?

That desire for continuity which is felt by all rational men is particularly strong in the Church for two reasons. In the first place, she believes herself to be guided by the Holy Spirit, originally imparted to the apostles by our Lord, and handed down, through a continuous chain of effectual symbolism, to the duly consecrated bishops and duly ordained priests of the present day.

The term "tradition," as used by the Church, might be defined as "the preservation of Christian truth combined with coherent organic development of all its implications." A living tradition is never static. It constantly grows and changes without breach of continuity and without injury to its essential core of truth. The traditionalism of the Church is therefore inseparable from its belief in the progressive development of Christian doctrine. The

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Churchman, instead of fighting his way back against the stream of time to a supposedly "primitive" Gospel, regards the life and the words of Christ as seeds which were intended to grow in men's minds throughout the centuries. He is interested in their ever-expanding implications for the successive stages of the human intellect. Here one may think without irreverence of the plays of Shakespeare. Everything that Shakespeare could possibly have meant exists, explicitly or implicitly, in the *First Folio* of 1623, but students are still discovering more and more of that meaning. The danger that the meaning may be theirs rather than Shakespeare's is great, but that danger would not exist if the critic could justly claim to be inspired and guided by the very spirit of Shakespeare.

The developmental aspect of any tradition is always hindered by hostility from without. For about four centuries the Church has been absorbed in defending her essential beliefs and practices against formidable enemies. Thus she has necessarily but very unfortunately been forced into an apologetic attitude which has left insufficient scope for that freedom and flexibility which belong to a healthy, living tradition. Confronted by an unfriendly present and a dubious future, she has turned her face too exclusively toward the past.

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But now the war against religion steadily abates its fury, and the Church again finds it possible to cultivate a progressive tradition which has descended into the present from the past, and which will move onward into the future with continuous organic enrichment of the eternal truths which she preserves. There is increasing opportunity for a living, dynamic orthodoxy which, though never deviating from the essentials of Christianity, is quite free from the ignorant obscurantism and vulgar unimaginativeness of so-called "Fundamentalism"; an orthodoxy which moves onward with the march of intellect, gladly absorbs all genuine knowledge, and grants to all believers the free use of critical thought and speech.

What kind and degree of authority are possessed by the Church? I firmly believe in the infallibility of the Church that exists as a thought in God's mind, but not in the infallibility of any of our human endeavors to express that thought. The link between the Church Invisible and the Church Visible is indeed a strong one, being none other than our Lord Himself. He instituted on this earth one Holy and Apostolic Church, placed it under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, and entrusted to it the duty of administering the sacraments and preaching the Gospel. The consensus

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of opinion as represented by the doctrines and practices of this Church is and ought to be immensely authoritative. The Christian may affirm the beliefs of the Church because he is convinced of their truth, or because he thinks that the Church possesses an *a priori* right to command him to do so. I warmly accept the former view, and as warmly reject the latter. I stand ready to follow the Church in spiritual matters because she has demonstrated her power to mediate between man and God and to tell the whole truth about Christianity; but I cannot guarantee an absolutely unconditional obedience.

The question of infallibility arises only in relation to some disputed point. If the point is disputed, how can the consensus of Christian opinion be determined with such certitude that the individual must regard it as infallible? And if opinion is not unanimous, how closely must it approach unanimity for its authority to be decisive? To what extent is the criterion of religious authority quantitative, and to what extent is it qualitative? For me, an ecumenical council of the entire Church represents the highest possible form of religious authority; but even this authority, to one who has attended many faculty meetings, is far from infallible.

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“But college faculties do not enjoy the special guidance of the Holy Spirit.” True—very true indeed. The whole question depends on whether the Holy Spirit operates in the Church quite independently of human free will. If so, the Church on earth is a perfect reflection of the Church in God’s mind, and is therefore infallible. But a glance at the past history and present condition of the Church makes this supposition seem almost blasphemous. Free will is the inescapable conditioning circumstance established by God for all His dealings with man, and I cannot believe that He would abrogate it even for the sake of the Church. If individuals are capable of sin after receiving the Holy Ghost at baptism I see no reason to suppose that the same precious aid has rendered the Church absolutely incapable of error. It may well be that the Church enjoys divine guidance of a kind and degree that no individual can claim, but there is sadly ample evidence that she has also been granted the freedom to stray from her Guide. Let us be grateful for the wonderful gifts of the Comforter without imputing infallibility to an institution in whose shaping sinful and ignorant man has been allowed to play so large a part. The Church herself should be restrained by Christian humility from laying claim to inerrancy. Her proper spirit

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is nobly expressed in the Book of Common Prayer: "O Gracious Father, we humbly beseech Thee for Thy Holy Catholic Church; that Thou wouldest be pleased to fill it with all truth, in all peace. Where it is corrupt, purify it; where it is in error, direct it; where in any thing it is amiss, reform it. Where it is right, establish it; where it is in want, provide for it; where it is divided, reunite it." Such an attitude commands the obedient love of Christians more strongly than any dogmatic assertion of absolute authority.

If the Church as a whole is not infallible, still less so is any single priest or bishop of the Church. The Romanist doctrine of papal infallibility affronts my reason and my feelings. The Spirit seems to have borne witness against it, for the conception of authority which finally resulted in its formal promulgation has been a fruitful source of harm to Catholic Christianity. Upon this rock the Church of Christ has been split. Even if, as some Romanist theologians assert, the Pope is to be held infallible only as the mouthpiece of an infallible institution, the dogma must remain unacceptable to all who refuse to believe in an infallible Church on earth.

Rejection of infallibility is not inconsistent with the utmost reverence for the Church, or with the

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belief that it possesses an authority which, in all but very exceptional cases, may be regarded as final. Stained as it must inevitably be by human error, it is the divinely instituted channel of divine grace and the repository of more than human wisdom and spiritual power.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself." The lawyer's question in Luke 10:29, "And who is my neighbor?" occasions the story of the good Samaritan. A modern would be more likely to ask, "And who is my God?" Amiably uncertain about man's relations with God, some of the modern churches devote their energies almost exclusively to improving man's relations with man. They have departed widely from their original belief in justification by faith alone, for they concern themselves primarily with good works. The sermons are likely to be lively speeches on topics of the day. There are settlements and charities; clubs, concerts, dances, picnics, ping-pong tournaments, and motion pictures. But has this whirl of "campus activities" a center of religious peace, or is it an attempt to fill a great void by means of practical bustle? There was a time when most churches needed to be reminded of their social re-

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sponsibilities. They now need to be reminded that they can best serve the world by a resolute other-worldliness. Christ defended the contemplative Mary against the active Martha. He did not indeed condemn Martha, but He would have done so had He not known that her anxious toil arose from loving faith in Him. We cannot truly become the brothers of men without knowing ourselves to be the children of God. Our Lord's second commandment stands or falls according to whether the first is believed and acted upon. When this fact is forgotten, a church collapses into the naturalistic flux which it is supposed to transcend.

The ideal Church which I am attempting to describe regards the Christian love of God as prerequisite to the Christian love of neighbor. She is active in charity and civic service, lending her aid to all good causes. But immediate practical usefulness is by no means her chief concern, and she mingles in the affairs of the day primarily to demonstrate the fruits of contemplation in the active life. Her real task is, through religious instruction and worship, to raise our hearts above the world so that they may feel the presence of God. If she accomplishes that aim, we cannot but rise from our knees and go forth to serve our fellow-men in the spirit of Christ. But to reverse this

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process is to confuse natural ethics with supernatural religion. We must not suppose that there is anything religious *per se* in fighting Tammany, teaching poor little boys to play basketball, or persuading the young people of the community to dance with one another in drearily wholesome surroundings. Love of God comes first.

Yet although the Church is other-worldly, she is thoroughly practical in her own spiritual realm. She was deeply versed in psychology centuries before that science had been invented. The Church knows, for example, that the lazy human animal needs plenty of regular, systematic, external discipline in the formation of religious habits. She lays great emphasis on those good works which may be classified as acts of devotion. These are practical devices for sending the soul outward toward God. It is recognized, of course, that no such act is of the slightest efficacy unless it arises from a sincerely pious intention. But although the Church fully appreciates the all-importance of inwardness, she distrusts the sort of inwardness which is so very inward that it never gets out. The externalizing of religious feeling in regularly repeated formal acts of devotion both disciplines and elevates the worshipper's heart, and we may believe that it is pleasing to Him who has so bounti-

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fully externalized His own love in the recurrent patterns of nature and the familiar rhythms of human life. The Church also recognizes that the systematic performance of such good works often leads to a deeper and stronger faith than that which originally impelled them. This fact, though repugnant to some minds, has long been a commonplace of psychology. Outwardness has a tremendous effect upon inwardness.

The psychological realism of the Church is shown also in her recognition of the human need for confession and forgiveness. The exact nature of priestly absolution may be disputed, and there is disagreement as to whether confession is an absolutely obligatory sacrament or merely a valuable sacramental opportunity of which Christians should avail themselves from time to time when their hearts are heavy with sin. Without attempting to argue these questions, I point out the wisdom of the Church in providing a means whereby we can unburden our souls to a human but impersonal representative of divine forgiveness.

My other-worldly but practical Church realizes that the infinite distance between man and God requires a bridge over the abyss. In building that bridge, she offers us Christ as in the highest sense our only mediator and advocate. Christ in turn is

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brought close to us through the Holy Spirit at work in the Church and her sacraments. But the bridge of mediation has other supports, which, though of less importance, nevertheless perform their part in uniting man with God. There is the Virgin Mother, holiest of created beings, whose prayers in our behalf are supremely acceptable to the God who made her blessed among women. There are the saints, whose exceptional holiness gives them, in the mind of the Church, a position intermediate between ordinary human nature and divine nature, and who may be asked to intercede for us. And we may think of chosen heavenly spirits called angels, messengers whose joy it is to translate to man's imagination some of the thoughts of God. The Church boldly and concretely symbolizes these mysteries for us through poetry, music, architecture, sculpture, painting, and the priestly dance before the ark of the Lord.

At the divinely authorized hands of the Church, then, the unthinkable and imperceptible undergo a process of mediation until they are brought within the grasp of the human mind and are thus made practical forces without ceasing to be metaphysical truths. "But this is bringing high things low." Yes, much as the highest of all things was brought low in a stable at Bethlehem—that low

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things might be raised high. To some Christians this process seems over-elaborate and obstructive. "Why not just sit down and have a heart-to-heart talk with God?" Because it is almost never possible to do so. Only a few great mystics have enjoyed immediate communion with the Godhead, and their contemplations have generally been achieved at the summit of the path of mediation rather than outside of that path. "But may we not trust the inner light?" The inner light, real and precious as it is, is only a flickering candle that must constantly be rekindled from the great outer Light. Without this rekindling, to say that we are guided by the inner light usually means that we are deifying our own little egos. As for the accusation of obstructionism, to say that the series of mediations hinders me from reaching God is exactly like saying that the images of a great poem hinder me from understanding the poet's thought. A road—to shift the metaphor—does not get between me and the place I want to reach.

But the aim of Christianity is not achieved until the human soul stands utterly alone in the presence of its Maker. The idea of lower and higher levels on the path between man and God may indeed become a spiritual obstacle unless every soul that sets out on the journey continues *to the end*. The

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Church must beware of crowding this path with too many friendly guides and advocates, and of over-emphasizing their *intrinsic* importance. The result may be a psychological, though of course not a doctrinal, approximation to polytheism.

For example, the love and veneration due the Blessed Virgin, and the thought of her as an intercessor for man before the throne of God, represent profound and helpful truths of religious intuition. It seems almost impious to suggest that she could ever assume too large a place in the thought of a Christian. But the harsh fact is that the minds of far too many Christians seldom rise above the Virgin to the God who created her; far too many invest her with divine qualities and powers. Similarly the Church should be watchful in maintaining a sane and wholesome view of the relations between man and the saints in heaven. The intercessors should not be pictured as swarming too thickly and clamorously about the Throne. There must be room for you and me. In particular, the practice of regarding each of the principal saints as a bureaucratic specialist endowed with quasi-independent power to secure for us favors of a certain kind deserves condemnation; and the idea that the accumulated grace of sainthood constitutes a fund to be paid out by the Church in indulgences is a

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source of the greatest spiritual harm. Symbols should not be stretched beyond the breaking-point, nor noble metaphors tortured into incredible assertions of fact. My ideal Church will grant her children wide liberty of judgment in their reliance upon the mediating power of creatures; she herself will use the rising scale of mediation with reverent discretion, seizing upon its benefits without succumbing to its snares.

According to Mr. Santayana, the trouble with superstitious people is not that they have too much imagination, but that they are not aware of having any. Many Christians are in danger of forgetting that they possess an imagination. My Christian Church, however, is fully aware that the externalized and formulated expression of religious belief must and should be in large measure the work of man's poetic imagination. More Platonic than Aristotelian in spirit, she does not allow her visions to become dry, literal, and hair-splittingly rationalistic. She preserves the color and the passion of religious inspiration. She treats myths as myths, legends as legends, symbols as symbols. Knowing that many of her facts are not like the facts of science, she gladly affirms that they are like the facts of inspired poetry.

Large groups of Christians are unduly suspi-

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cious of the poetic and imaginative aspects of religion. They are obsessed by a puritanical dread of beauty. Their doctrines and forms of worship are harsh, barren, repressed, and literalistic. At the other extreme lies the fervently fanciful Christianity of people who have in their hearts a genuinely religious ardor but do not quite know what to do with it; whose piety is sentimental; whose imagination, though sincere, is vulgar. Their poem of faith is overburdened with minutely analyzed conceits; excessively cluttered with *things*, like the parlor of a Victorian house; tawdry, like an old-fashioned lacework valentine. The ideal Church preserves a just balance between these undesirable extremes. She possesses the qualities of a great poetic imagination: concrete, vivid, richly sensuous and ardent; but at the same time noble, austere, and frugal.

The ceremonial of my Church is formal and elaborate in a way very perplexing to those persons who suppose that a genuflection is a sure sign of hypocrisy. A large amount of ritual is merely practical—a body of customs which time has shown to be the most efficient and dignified way of doing what needs to be done in the course of the service. But the ceremonials of the Church have more than merely practical importance. They emphasize the

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solemnity of worship by drawing a firm line between the ways of the Church and the ways of the world. Their psychological function is considerable, for they simultaneously express the collective feelings of the congregation and stimulate the personal feelings of the individual worshipper. No one who has seen a whole congregation drop to their knees at the words "and was incarnate" in the Creed will dismiss ritual as hollow mummery. Then, too—a very important point—ceremonial subordinates the personality of the priest to his function.

But for me, and doubtless for many others, ceremonial is chiefly significant as the form of the poetry of religion. It fulfills Coleridge's definition of poetry—"more than usual emotion under more than usual control." Although the best Christian theology is highly intellectual, the best Christian worship is deeply emotional. Now the emotions of human beings who have been brought together in a large group require the discipline of a beautiful external form. Otherwise they are liable to be expressed in sentimental, hysterical, or eccentric ways which are harmful and ugly in themselves and which would make the service a chaos. Thanks to the ceremonial of the Church, the passions of the congregation flow deeply and strongly toward the

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altar without spilling over. Ceremonial, then, is the rhyme and metre of piety.

In a street-car one Sunday morning I fell into conversation with a stranger who, having recently come to New York, had not yet found a preacher who could equal his old minister in Detroit. "I am looking," said he, "for a man who can keep me awake." That ingenuous remark characterizes a great deal of modern church-going. Christians may roughly be divided into those who want to listen to edifying orations, and those who want to lift up their hearts in beautiful and intense worship. I belong to the latter class. Being a professional lecturer, I am perhaps too much inclined to be sceptical of the value of preaching. To be serious, I fully recognize the importance of the sermon, and shall always be grateful to preachers of more than one denomination for having increased my understanding of Christian truth. Nevertheless I believe that when the sermon assumes the central rôle the church becomes a lecture-hall rather than a place of worship. A good sermon may do much to prepare us for the union which is the aim of Christianity, but it is powerless to create that union within us. Words can never give us that which is beyond words. The heart of the church is not the pulpit, but the altar of God.

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It follows that my conception of Christian worship is sacramental rather than evangelical. Of course these terms are not mutually exclusive. The Church, as divinely commissioned to preach and interpret the Gospel, is and always has been evangelical. But her evangelism has steadily pointed toward the sacraments as the pinnacle of Christian experience in this life. Perhaps it is not too paradoxical to say that the Church has discovered the sacraments to be the ultimate evangelists which convey those inexpressible truths which lie behind the words of Scripture.

The all-inclusive catholicity of the ideal Church is one source of its spiritual power. The other great source—to me an even greater one—is the intense concentration of its energies in a single religious action. The Church is a broad sword with a sharp point, and that point is the Holy Eucharist.

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.” Theologians can doubtless draw subtle distinctions between grace, love, and fellowship as prayed for in this formula of benediction; but they would no more deny the essential unity of these concepts than the essential unity of the three persons of the Trinity. Grace may itself be defined as God’s operative love and feeling of fellowship to-

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ward man, a spiritual energy which we are intended to seize upon and use for the building of our souls. Now there is a sense in which this energy is all-pervasive: everything in nature and in human life can be regarded in some measure as a manifestation of it. But precisely because it is everywhere, this divine energy needs to be thought of as peculiarly *somewhere*. Steam cannot be put to work unless it is compressed.

The supreme evidence of God's grace is His life and death for man in Jesus Christ—the Incarnation and the Atonement as one sublime fact. The best means of keeping the spiritual values of this sacrifice alive in men's hearts, and of constantly renewing them, would be a symbol of that sacrifice. That is precisely what the Holy Eucharist is, whether witnessed in the Mass or taken in Communion. According to the Book of Common Prayer, this sacrament was instituted "for the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ, and of the benefits which we receive thereby." It comprises everything that man believes of God, everything that God promises to man.

But merely to call the Holy Eucharist a symbol falls short of the truth. It is not merely a symbol, but an *effectual* symbol—that is, one which exerts

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a power external to those who employ it. This means that the symbol is not something that man has devised, but something that has been devised *for* him by our Lord—or at the very least evolved by man from our Lord's clear indication of how the symbol should be constructed and used. Here let me quote from the Anglican ritual:

“For in the night in which He was betrayed, He took Bread; and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and gave it to His disciples, saying; Take, eat, this is my Body, which is given for you; Do this in remembrance of Me. Likewise after supper, He took the Cup; and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of this; For this is My Blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you, and for many, for the remission of sins; Do this, as oft as ye shall drink it, in remembrance of Me.

“Wherefore, O Lord and Heavenly Father, according to the institution of Thy dearly beloved Son our Saviour Jesus Christ, we, Thy humble servants, do celebrate and make here before Thy Divine Majesty, with these Thy holy gifts, which we now offer unto Thee, the memorial Thy Son hath commanded us to make; having in remembrance His blessed passion and precious death, His mighty resurrection and glorious ascension; ren-

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dering unto Thee most hearty thanks for the innumerable benefits procured unto us by the same.

“And we most humbly beseech Thee, O merciful Father, to hear us; and of Thy almighty goodness, vouchsafe to bless and sanctify, with Thy Word and Holy Spirit, these Thy gifts and creatures of bread and wine; that we receiving them according to Thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ’s holy institution, in remembrance of His death and passion, may be partakers of His most blessed Body and Blood.”

This, you see is quite different from the notion that the communion service is an old and beautiful custom to which great importance used to be attached, and which may as well be continued as a wistful traditional gesture. But the Church to which I have given my allegiance goes even further than many Christians who have a deep veneration for this sacrament. Around the doctrine of Transubstantiation, with its corollary of the Real Presence, has arisen a tangle of theological subtleties with which I am wholly incompetent to deal. I can only say that no well-instructed Christian believes that what is, to the human senses, bread and wine, is transformed into what is, to the human senses, flesh and blood. “Substance,” in this context, is a metaphysical rather than a physical

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term. It means "essential nature," not "superficial properties." Since the problem is one of spiritual dynamics, we may think of a transformation of one kind of energy into another kind of energy. The physical nourishment of the bread and wine becomes the spiritual nourishment which is, for us, the true substance of Christ's body and blood.

To quote a helpful authority: "We are bound to say that the bread and wine are changed by consecration. They acquire a new property, namely, that their devout reception secures and normally conditions participation in the blessings of Christ's sacrifice, and therefore in His life. Regard being had to their sacrificial context, this is the natural meaning of the description of the consecrated elements, in relation to their consumption, as our Lord's body and blood—His body given for us and His blood shed for us. Outwardly, we have bread and wine; the inward part and meaning of the sacrament is that these become in this sense the body and blood of our Lord, and as such are received by His people. The act of reception requires appropriation by faith, if reception is to have its proper consequence and complete meaning; but the opportunity for reception and appropriation is afforded by the sacramental Gifts. The body and blood of our Lord are given after a spiritual and heavenly

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manner, not by any process separate from, and merely concomitant with, visible administration, but because the bread and wine become in the above sense (without connotation of materialism) His Body and His Blood.”¹

To this I can only add that for me the difficulties of the question are lightened by the fundamental conception of reality as the thought of God. God’s metaphors are solidier than rocks; the play of His imagination is sharper than steel. If Incarnate God told the disciples, “This is my body, and this is my blood,” there must be a sense in which transubstantiation and God’s presence in the consecrated elements are absolutely true. What that sense is, may be beyond the power of human words to declare, but to believe that the mystery contains the most precious of all truths is not beyond the power of human faith. In the Holy Eucharist thus regarded we achieve the final aim of Christianity—the union of the human soul, aided by God the Holy Ghost at work in His Church, through God the Son, with God the Father.

I have attempted to describe the main features of what I regard as the ideal of the Christian Church. It is probably evident that I am a Catho-

¹ W. Spens, in *Essays Catholic and Critical* (London, 1926), p. 441. Quoted by permission of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

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lic, but not a Romanist. I have found the closest approximation of my ideal within the Anglican communion.

Though this chapter bristles with debatable points, further argument would probably be futile. The reader knows the reasons for my decision, and must judge their validity for himself. It should at least be evident that my choice is the outcome of one continuous train of sincere thought. Once I had opened my mind to the conceivability of the religious hypothesis, I found that I had always believed in the higher human values and in the reality of mind as a creative force. These beliefs pointed toward belief in God, and belief in God toward Christianity. Finally, in order to possess Christianity in what seems to me its most rational, inclusive, beautiful, and efficacious form, I have come to the altar of Episcopalianism—the church in which I was baptized thirty-nine years ago.

CHAPTER X

JOURNEY'S END

THE Church of England has at no time relinquished its claim to be a legitimate branch of the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. The validity of that claim is endlessly debatable because the question hinges upon the definition of terms. The Anglican communion is obviously "protestant" as protesting against certain errors which it believes to have infected the Church of Rome. It is *not* "protestant" in relation to the Catholic ideal. Hence the English Church is not to be branded as schismatic and heretical unless Rome is a perfect reflection of the ideal Catholic Church—a belief which the non-Romanist need not accept.

The Anglican Church affirms the essential doctrines of Catholicism. Through all its vicissitudes it has preserved the Catholic conception of sacramental religion and of the Church as a channel of grace. It has inherited and maintained the apostolic succession and the ordaining of priests by the laying on of hands. During part of the reign of

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Elizabeth, and from the Civil Wars of the seventeenth century to the eighteen-thirties, the Catholicism of the English Church, though never obliterated, was much obscured; and even today it is not fully recognized by all Episcopalians. Ever since the Oxford Movement, however, it has become increasingly possible to enjoy, within the charitable breadth of the Anglican communion, a truly Catholic creed, philosophy, and form of worship. American Episcopalianism has welcomed this Catholic revival with such enthusiasm that Anglo-Catholicism is today the most vital and flourishing element in our so-called Protestant Episcopal Church.

But this form of Catholicism is as yet only imperfectly understood by the general public. There is a widespread impression that it is merely a half-way attitude assumed by people who like certain features of Catholicism but hesitate to become genuine Catholics. The logical place for such people, it is often asserted, is the Roman Church. It is certainly true that, from John Henry Newman to Father Delany, a thin but steady line of converts has moved from Anglican to Roman Catholicism. Their reasons have varied with the individual case, but the commonest and strongest motives have been the desire for that certitude which comes from obedience to absolute authority, the longing

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for religious unity and universality in this world, the psychological attraction of visible age, bigness, majesty and power, and technical doubts as to the validity of Anglican orders. Another important factor in some cases has been the intolerance of the Church of England herself. As one reads the *Apologia pro Vita Sua*, one wonders whether Newman would ever have left the Church which he loved so well if she had been less unfriendly to his Catholic ideals. The strength of this factor, however, is steadily diminishing with the spread of the Anglo-Catholic viewpoint. Under present circumstances the natural Romanist within the Anglican communion will eventually find his way to Rome, while the natural Anglican may quite happily remain where he is. Both are entitled to call themselves Catholics.

Thus for some people Anglo-Catholicism is a lodging for the night, while for others it is a permanent home. I regard myself as a member of the latter class. When I consider how utterly my religious views have changed within twelve short months, I realize the absurdity of declaring that I will *never* become a Romanist. I can only say that I have carefully considered the step, and that at present it seems absolutely inconceivable. I feel a strong sense of having reached a definite stopping-

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place. Nothing in my mind suggests that I shall ever go any further; indeed, nothing suggests that there is any "further" to go.

My chief reasons for refusing to join the Church of Rome may be inferred from the preceding chapter. I reject infallibility and a few other Romanist doctrines, disapprove of several Romanist practices which are matters of custom rather than of dogma, and am out of sympathy with certain characteristic products of Romanist imagination. I do not feel that my religion could breathe happily in the atmosphere of modern Roman Catholicism.

And yet I have deep love and veneration for the Church of Rome. Whatever her faults, she remains gloriously in possession of truths which I must make my own at any cost. Were there no other alternative I should willingly submit to Rome and take the bad for the sake of the precious good. But there *is* another alternative, and for me a wholly satisfactory one. Anglo-Catholicism, as I see it, is just Catholic religion without the features which I dislike in Rome, and with positive merits not possessed, or possessed less richly, by the sister church. No sad accidents of history have prevented the Anglican communion from embracing all that is good in every variety of Christian experience. Indeed, it is not too paradoxical to say that the Catholicism

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of the Episcopalian Church owes much to the Protestant position which she assumes toward the Roman conception of authority. Anglicans enjoy a wholesome individualism, a personal approach to God through the Church, and an opportunity for *free* obedience which, though by no means alien to truly Catholic religion, have become historically associated with the highest type of Protestantism. Anglo-Catholicism makes no claim to infallibility; she fully recognizes the large poetical and symbolic element in religion; her imagination, though warm and rich, has dignity and restraint; her philosophical viewpoint is Platonic rather than Aristotelian; she loves the Virgin and the Saints without turning creaturely intercessors into minor deities; she has no temporal claims or ambitions; she treats her adult communicants as adults; her services are in the language of the worshipper; her intellectual viewpoint is tolerant, mature, progressive, and critical. In a truly Catholic spirit she offers me the cup of Christ, and I accept the gift with joy.

I must not pretend that this solution of my problem is wholly free from difficulties. Many Episcopalians will insist that their church is essentially Protestant, and that such views as mine represent an insidious attempt to betray her into the hands

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of the Pope. In order to obtain what I want I must identify myself with a particular church party; I must, in justice to myself, to other Episcopalians, and to Romanists, call myself an Anglo-Catholic. In this little group of "high" churches, so greatly misunderstood by most other religious bodies, the vision of Catholic unity and universality seems very far away. The remedy for this feeling of smallness and loneliness is not to look wistfully over the fence at Rome, but to look upward in union of spirit with the one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of God's thought.

The Anglo-Catholics have plenty of work to do. They must justify in the eyes of the world their right to call themselves Catholics. In a spirit of moderation and charity, but without relaxation of vital principles, they must gradually convince their brethren that the so-called Protestant Episcopal Church is truly a Catholic Church. They must utterly detach themselves from a spurious High Churchism which, without being Catholic at heart, dabbles in ritual in an affectedly æsthetic spirit—"not for the doctrine, but the music there." And though I fear that not all my fellow-Anglicans will agree with me, I strongly believe that the well-being of Anglo-Catholicism, and the ultimate furtherance of Catholic unity, demand at present

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the drawing of a firm though friendly line of demarcation between herself and Rome. It should be possible to grow in essential Catholicism without minute, labored, self-conscious imitation of the less desirable features of the great sister church.

Yes, my church has delicate tasks to perform, and treacherous snares to avoid. She has already made mistakes, and will make more in the future. But a pragmatic Platonist like myself does not expect perfection on this earth. One of the ideas of God is a Christian Church. That idea alone is real, single, holy, Catholic, apostolic. No human organization, however much aided by the Holy Spirit, can claim to be an absolutely unsullied reflection of it. Therefore it is my duty as a Christian to cleave to that visible church which most closely approaches my conception of the Church Invisible. I may be wrong, but I must choose. I have chosen, and my wanderings have reached a happy end.

Naturally I should be glad to have the reader accept my solution of the problem. I urge him to investigate its merits for himself—to attend low and high masses at an Anglo-Catholic church, to have an interview with its rector, and to read the books which he will recommend. Here of course I speak not to those who have already found a

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church which satisfies their religious needs, but to those who have as yet found no church at all, or who think that Christianity is dead because they have made the mistake of identifying Christianity with a dead church. Christianity might come alive in their hearts if they acquainted themselves with the breadth, beauty, and power of a *living* church.

But my final plea to the reader is, not that he should become an Anglican, but that he should think hard about religion and follow his thought through to some definite, workable conclusion. Experience abundantly proves that the person whose religious views are expressed in such statements as, "Well, I suppose there must be Something," has found no religion worth having. Today the need for a faith of real clarity, firmness, and energy is pressing. We are told that a "planned civilization" offers the only escape from the difficulties which beset the world. We must become the masters and not the slaves of our mechanical creations. We must interpret experience rationally and shape our environment into agreement with a sound theory of life. Men must deliberately make a world that is fit for men to live in. But can any such plan even be dreamed of except against a background of religious belief? If man is wholly a physico-chemical product of blind forces, all his

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talk about a planned civilization is windy nonsense. Let us have the courage to face the inescapable fact. Unless we are the children of a loving God there is no justification for regarding human mentality as anything but an abnormal activity of organic cells—a sort of cancer in the body of nature. If this is the bitter truth, let us accept it and rot quietly away into nothingness, saying with Theodore Dreiser: “Whatever man does is something that can only prolong the struggles and worries and for the most part futile dreams of those with whom he finds himself companioned here in this atomic or cellular welter. . . . In short, I catch no meaning from all I have seen, and pass quite as I came, confused and dismayed.”

But what is the source of this cancerous view of man? The human mind, operating upon materials which it finds within itself. And what, so far as natural reason can discern, is the source of the religious view of man? The human mind, operating upon materials which it finds within itself. And how shall we judge the reality and worth of the materials which form these opposing views? By using the human mind.

We are equally at liberty to commit intellectual and spiritual suicide or to seek God. What we *have* been doing for about two centuries is to drift

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idly with the flux of experience, saying in the same breath that we can form no conclusions without positive knowledge and that there is no such thing as positive knowledge. But at last we begin to realize that we have drifted to the brink of chaos, and that we must either be swept over the fall like logs or row up-stream like men. I used to deny the assertion of William James that the choice between religion and non-religion was a "forced option," but the present situation has shown that he is right. The option is now forced. We must choose between inhuman chaos and human planning, and the latter is impossible without religious faith. Perhaps the "planned civilization" of the future is the civilization that God planned very long ago. However that may be, the time has come for us to think about religion, to form a conclusion, and to act on it.

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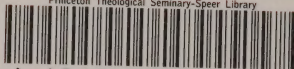
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